University of Alberta

The Good Official ... Interrupted

by

Rodney Steven Murray

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Abstract

The Good Official ... Interrupted is a Cultural Studies investigation into the production of 'good' sport officials. It is an analysis of the referee-specific discourse that governs the production and maintenance of 'good' officials. It is an analysis of the discourses of sport participants at large that continually dismiss, vilify, and subordinate officials. The third chapter is a critical examination of the interruption that women officials create in the discourse of the Good Official through their participation at elite levels of officiating. Central to this discussion are the two female officials hired to referee in the National Basketball Association in 1997, Violet Palmer and Dee Kantner. Ultimately, *The Good Official ...Interrupted* is about identity politics in a discourse highly informed by hegemonic masculinity, and how individual subjects must negotiate its obstacles of sexism, racism, and homophobia.

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Chapter One:
Researching the Good Official

> These are tough women. They can take this—and more. "Confrontation is part of being a referee," said [Violet] Palmer. "If players cross the line, they will receive a technical foul." Getting tossed from a game should convince the rude and recalcitrant that women refs have the same authority as men.[1]

Framing the Research

In late February of 2001, Karen Lasuik was honoured by both the Alberta and Edmonton Basketball Officials Associations as the first woman official to receive a FIBA card, which qualifies the holder to work international FIBA sanctioned basketball events, such as Pan Am Games, World Championships, and the Olympics. In achieving this level, Karen became one of four Canadian women to hold such a position. In all, Canada (CABO) has fourteen active FIBA carded officials. With so relatively few officials having received their FIBA cards, this is indeed an accomplishment deserving of recognition by the local, provincial, and even national officials associations of which Karen is a member. However, it is not the recognition for this achievement that is as worthy of investigation as Karen's response to it. In her acceptance speech for the award, which was presented by the ABOA and the EBOA, Karen indicated that she hoped her accomplishments could serve as an inspiration, not just for women officials, but for all officials who desire to reach the same levels and have the work ethic to do so.

To many present, Karen's attempt to minimize the role gender plays in one's ability to advance as an official seemed appropriate. She reiterated a common ideal in sport – it doesn't matter who you are, if you want something bad enough, and you work hard enough for it, you can achieve your goals. The problem with this ideology is that it

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[1] E.J. Dionne, Jr., "Not for men only: whistle-blowing as unisex skill", *Commonweal*, Vol. 124 Issue 20 (11/21/97): 7.

inevitably leads those individuals who do not achieve their goals to believe it was solely their own fault. Accordingly, to not achieve one's goals must mean that either the individual's desire or effort was insufficient. However, what this thinking ignores are all of the "other things" that are going on that open or close possibilities for these individuals.

To get at some of these "other things", in this research I plan to investigate how representations of certain precursory events may affect the current ways women officials are represented. Some of the more prominent events leading up to the current state of events are the hiring of two women to officiate in the National Basketball Association, the advent of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), and the rise in popularity of not only women's basketball, but of sport for women in general.

In 1997, two women joined the ranks of officials who referee in the National Basketball Association (NBA). This marked the first time in North American sport history that a woman has officiated in any all-male professional sport. And unlike other potentially "token" appearances by women in traditionally male domains, Violet Palmer and Dee Kantner emerged as legitimate participants. "Female referees like Kantner [and Palmer] are here to stay."[2] These two women have not only crossed into one of the traditional preserves of maleness and masculinity, but have established themselves as individual success stories.[3] The level of their "success", I will argue, can be measured by the way in which these women are represented in various media accounts. Through an analysis of how Kantner and Palmer are represented across these different media

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[2] Chris Ballard, *Sports Illustrated*, (03/19/2001).

[3] Violet Palmer is entering her sixth season as an NBA official. Dee Kantner was fired by the NBA at the end of the 2001-2002 season. This is taken up again in later discussions.

accounts, it is possible to reveal how women officials, like Karen Lasuik, are able to participate at elite levels.

It is interesting to note that under normal circumstances the NBA prohibits media interviews with its officials. However, the attention brought about by the hiring of both Kantner and Palmer elicited a one-time, exclusive interview and press conference with the women officials. In the subsequent time period little has been written about the two as the strict code of the NBA has taken over, prohibiting further interviews and levying heavy fines to players and coaches who speak out about the officials or their officiating. Despite these prohibitions, commentary still does manage to find its way into print. Violet Palmer recognizes the additional emphasis placed on their performance due to gender biases. "Players and coaches say negative things about refs all the time. 'It's just that you read about it with us because we're the women refs.'"[4] It is within these popular cultural accounts that an interesting site for a critical analysis is found.

In addition, there are some noticeable silences that are just as worthy of investigation. Take the Women's National Basketball Association for example. Since its inaugural season in 1997, the WNBA has proven to be a successful and legitimate space for women basketball players, coaches, and administrators to earn a living in professional sport. The omitted participant from this group includes the officials, 56% of whom are women, who make their professions in the league as well.[5] Likewise, similar numbers can be found in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) women's divisions. And, for the first time ever, the 2001 Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) Women's National

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[4] *ibid*

[5] Richard E. Lapchick, *1998 Racial and Gender Report Card*, Center for the Study of Sport in Society, Northeastern University: Boston (1998).

Championship was officiated by a three-woman crew. Participation by women officials in these other leagues goes almost exclusively unmentioned in popular media. The average fan of the NBA most likely sees Kantner or Palmer at work on a given night due to the high levels of media coverage for the league. The same does not hold true for the officials of the CIS or the WNBA, which served as the proving ground for both Kantner and Palmer. And while the popularity of these leagues is increasing, there was never any issue made over the women who officiate women's basketball. Dee Kantner was the Supervisor of Officials for the WNBA prior to being hired by the NBA, and both Kantner and Palmer have officiated championship games for NCAA women's basketball. However, it was not until they were hired to officiate in the all-male NBA that any significant interest was generated publicly. It is within these less prevalent representations of women's participation as officials that I believe there is also valuable information as to how their participation is affected at elite levels.

All of these representations, wherever they are found, will be read through the discourse of hegemonic masculinity and its implicit sexism, racism, and homophobia. Downplaying the role gender plays in her own advancement as an official, Karen Lasuik provides one example of how hegemonic masculinity elicits "spontaneous consent" to the "general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group."[6] Based on the offerings of several theorists, from Antonio Gramsci and Robert W. Connell, Michel Foucault and Stuart Hall, to Mary McDonald and Toby Miller, I suggest that this type of hegemony, masculine hegemony, is a condition of possibility for both women and men in sport. Both hegemonic masculinity and postfeminist rhetoric serve to subjugate women sport participants, especially women sport officials.

According to Gramsci, "hegemony is a contest of meanings in which a ruling class gains consent to the social order by making its power appear normal and natural."[7] Part of what I hope to accomplish in this research is to disrupt, or deconstruct, all that appears to be normal and/or natural about the masculinized representations of women officials. In the following sections, I outline the theoretical perspectives that inform my overall research. I explain the methodology and describe the methods I propose to use in this research. And finally, I expand upon this notion of hegemonic masculinity and why I feel it needs to be problematized in relation to this research.

Purpose of the Research

I am concerned with representations of sport officials, including women officials, across various media accounts. I am interested in how proposing alternative readings of these representations may create possibilities for continued participation by women as officials. In particular, I am interested in how women's participation as officials is normalized within traditionally masculine arenas. In addition, I am interested in the effects of these normalizing discourses on all of the subjects who participate in the discourse of what constitutes a 'good' official.

By looking closely at representations of officials within specific media accounts, I am able to examine the implications of broader or dominant discourses at work, what knowledge these discourses privilege, how that knowledge functions as power, and then look for the effects of that power.[8] I am also able to investigate how individuals operate (negotiate) within these discourses, and how subjects are constructed within these

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[6] Toby Miller, *Sportsex*. Temple University Press: Philadelphia (2001):47
[7] *ibid*
[8] To remain true to Foucault's *power/knowledge* nexus, I should then observe how the *new* power then forms *new* knowledge

specific discourses. And hopefully, this knowledge will serve to open up new spaces for subjects to maneuver in their worlds.

Research Objectives

> The telling of hockey history through its minoritarian elements expands the cultural files of the game and the potential for new subject formations that are not limited by the standard account.[9]

The first, and possibly most general, reason for embarking on this research of representations of officials is to provide, within academic discourses, a voice for sport officials as legitimate participants. I contend that officials are too often ignored as valid sport participants, despite the fact that they are essential within the contemporary (modern) workings of sport. While this objective may be met in a more subtle way than my other objectives, it is perhaps the most powerful way to enable alternative possibilities for subjects within these discourses.

Toby Miller indicates how hegemony comes to dominate within a cultural group:

> Ordinary people give 'spontaneous consent' to the 'general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group' as a consequence of the education and entertainment provided by intellectuals. The society contains old cultural meanings and practices, no longer dominant but still influential, and emergent ones, either propagated by an upcoming class or incorporated by the ruling elite. These discourses are expressed by intellectuals, who work at 'superstructural levels' to forge the 'hegemony which the dominant group exercises throughout society.'[10]

It is through this same mechanism that officials can become legitimate speakers within sporting discourses. I am not suggesting the formation of a new cultural elite, or dominant class. However, by enacting a vocabulary that can become an everyday part of

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[9] Gamal Abdel-Shehid citing Genosko in "Writing Hockey Thru Race: Rethinking Black Hockey in Canada" in Rinaldo Walcott (ed.), *Rude: Contemporary Black Canadian Cultural Criticism.* Insomniac Press: Toronto (2000).

[10] Toby Miller, citing Gramsci in *Sportsex.* Temple University Press: Philadelphia (2001): 47-48.

cultural life a voice can be provided for officials to be heard beyond their own circles. Perhaps simply by writing about officials as valid sport participants, officials can become valid sport participants in the eyes of mainstream culture.

The second, yet perhaps most specific objective, is indicated by the introductory quote to this section. My primary concern that underlies this research is how subject positions are constructed; or stated another way, how identity is created and maintained. Too often identities or subject positions for minorities or marginalized people are dependent upon dominant or mainstream ideologies. My objective, through reading representations of women qua officials, is to reveal how subject positions are influenced by the dominant discourse of hegemonic masculinity. The subject positions that I am concerned with are not limited to women officials. However, they will serve to highlight how identity formations are influenced by these dominant ideologies. In the end, I do hope that "new" ways of being, "new subject formations" are opened up through examining sport participation through the minoritarian element of women basketball officials.

Theoretical Perspective(s): Postmodernism, Cultural Studies, and Textual Poaching

> It is a truism of sociology and cultural studies today to say that life in the postmodern world is utterly mediated through representations.[11]

The preceding quotation could be enough, standing alone, to indicate the theoretical perspective(s) that inform my research project. However, the complexity of managing similar yet independent theoretical perspectives deserves more attention. The first item on this agenda – postmodernism.

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[11] Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, Routledge: New York (1989): 31.

Postmodernism

According to Linda Hutcheon, defining postmodernism has its complications.

> Few words are more used and abused in discussions of contemporary culture than the word 'postmodernism.' As a result, any attempt to define the word will necessarily and simultaneously have both positive and negative dimensions.[12]

Admitting this at the fore of this discussion will allow us to keep in mind the problematic of strictly defining postmodernism, and should serve to remind me and my readers of our complicity in constructing/reconstructing the very phenomena I wish to challenge. I say this, because "postmodernism ultimately manages to install and reinforce as much as undermine and subvert the conventions and presuppositions it appears to challenge."[13] We are bound in a circularity that is called complicitous critique.

I feel it is necessary to address this point now, since I want it to be clear that it is not my intention to reinforce a gender binary through my discussions of women, men, femininity, and/or masculinity. Nor is it my intention to propose alternative subject positions which are equally exclusive, prohibitive, and problematic (i.e., androgyny).[14] However, I do understand that the potential exists for this critique to surface in response to investigations dealing with these existing terms and concepts. Such is the paradox of being complicit in the critique.

Realizing the problems associated with summarizing postmodernism, I carefully do it in the following way. Fernandez-Balboa suggests that "postmodern theorists have

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[12] *ibid.* p. 1.
[13] *ibid.*
[14] Here I am referring to Judith Butler's critique of Foucault's publication of journals by Herculine Barbin, a nineteenth-century French hermaphrodite. In Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,*. Routledge: New York (1999): 119-147.

embraced two main ideas: that of subjectivity (i.e., the personal is political)" [15] and the *knowledge/power* nexus as explained by Michel Foucault.

Looking at the proposed design of my research, it should be apparent that my intentions are indeed to politicize the discursive representations of women sport officials and to challenge the alleged "naturalness" of these representations.

> [B]y simply making representation into an issue again postmodernism challenges our mimetic assumptions about representation (in any of its 'scrambled menu' meanings): assumptions about its transparency and common-sense naturalness.[16]

Evincing the ideologies that authorize/privilege certain representations and reject/dismiss others is "to acknowledge that representation has a politics."[17] In the case of women sport officials, this politic, I will argue, is grounded in a discourse of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is revisited in a later section.

To begin the discussion concerning *knowledge/power*, as the second idea embraced by postmodernism, inevitably means a turn to the offerings of Michel Foucault. "Umberto Eco has written that he considers postmodern 'the orientation of anyone who has learned the lesson of Foucault, i.e., that power is not something unitary that exists outside us'."[18] One theorist has outlined in great detail Foucault's relevance and importance to this research – that theorist is Stuart Hall.

> Even if language, in some sense, 'spoke us' (as Saussure tended to argue) it was also important that in certain historical moments, some people had more power to speak about some subjects than others (male doctors about mad female patients in the late nineteenth century, for example, to take one of the key examples developed in the work of Michel Foucault). Models of representation, these critics argued, ought to focus on these broader issues of knowledge and power.[19]

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[15] Juan-Miguel Fernandez-Balboa (ed.), *Critical Postmodernism in Human Movement, Physical Education, and Sport*; State University of New York Press: Albany (1997): 5.
[16] Hutcheon, p. 32.
[17] *ibid.* p. 42
[18] *ibid.* Hutcheon citing Rosso (1983): 3.
[19] Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Sage Publications: London (1997): 42.

In *Representations: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*[20], Stuart Hall details the ways in which Foucault addresses the problem of representation. "What concerned [Foucault] was the production of knowledge (rather than just meaning) through what he called discourse (rather than just language)."[21] It is this shift from language to discourse that proves most useful for Hall in his approach to cultural studies. Likewise, this research also benefits from such a shift.

It is the shift to the production of knowledge through discourse that allows us to ask several important questions. For example, what are the rules and practices that produce meaningful statements and regulate discourses, in this case, regarding basketball/sport officials?[22] What *power/knowledge* is actualized to make these representations both possible and seem "natural" or common-sense? These are the questions that are opened up by Foucault, and by both Hall's and Shogan's[23] application of Foucault. In Chapters Two and Four I also turn to one of Foucault's original works, *Discipline and Punish*.[24]

Cultural Studies

While still within a conversation about Stuart Hall, I would like to better situate this research within the framework of cultural studies. Few would argue that sport is not a major component of contemporary culture. "Important national and international [sporting] events ... are incorporated into a symbolic panoply of political rituals that

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[20] *ibid*
[21] *ibid*. p. 43.
[22] *ibid*. p. 44.
[23] In Chapter Two I rely heavily on Debra Shogan. *The Making of High Performance Athletes: Discipline, Diversity, and Ethics*. University of Toronto Press: Toronto (1999).
[24] Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan, Vintage Books: New York (1977).

serve to remind people of their national identity and 'common' destiny."[25] Thus, focusing this investigation within the context of the NBA, WNBA, NCAA, and CIS basketball, I am centering this research within both popular culture (professional sport) and elite sporting culture (American and Canadian elite basketball). A focus on the officials working at these levels of basketball is a focus on certain subjectivities within these communities. Thus, this research is centered in culturally specific discourses.

> A close encounter with the bodies at play and at work in athletic contests promises to help us rethink not only the parameters of sport itself, but the very conception of the practical and the popular as they have been understood in cultural studies more broadly.[26]

Cultural studies writer, Toby Miller, has had a strong influence upon my research. This influence is particularly evident in my decision to read representations of women officials against a backdrop of hegemonic masculinity. Miller, through his exploration of masculinity in both *Technologies of Truth: Cultural Citizenship and the Popular Media*[27] and his most recent book, *Sportsex*[28], convincingly establishes the need to read gendered representations as inexorably linked to discourses of normative masculinity. This foregrounding of hegemonic masculinity will be discussed again in a later section. However, one more item needs to be addressed before that can be done; that item – textual poaching.

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[25] George H. Sage, "Sociocultural Aspects of Human Movement" in *Critical Postmodernism in Human Movement, Physical Education,* Juan-Miguel Fernandez-Balboa (ed.), State University of New York Press: Albany (1997): 22

[26] Randy Martin and Toby Miller (eds.), *SportCult*, University of Minnesota: Minneapolis (1999): 1.

[27] Toby Miller, *Technologies of Truth: Cultural Citizenship and the Popular Media*, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis (1998).

[28] Toby Miller, *Sportsex*, Temple University Press: Philadelphia (2001).

Textual Poaching

> [F]ans actively assert their mastery over the mass-produced texts which provide the raw materials for their own cultural productions and the basis for their social interactions. In the process, fans cease to be simply an audience for popular texts; instead, they become active participants in the construction and circulation of textual meanings. ... Michel de Certeau (1984) has characterized such active reading as 'poaching'.[29]

The final theoretical perspective that influences my research project is textual poaching. As Henry Jenkins relates, it is possible for a community, in his case television fans, to put forth a creative/constructive reading of mainstream texts. I will argue that, as both a researcher and a member of a community of sport officials, my research project can benefit from 'poaching' in several ways. Firstly, poaching opens up two things; one is the type of texts that form my corpus, and the second is the way in which those texts can be read.

Jenkins explains the variety of texts that interest 'poachers' through the community of fans of the television show *Star Trek*. Their (the fans) mechanism for creating a community of individuals with similar interests is enacted by demonstrating that their interests are not exclusive to *Star Trek* alone.

> Moreover, their participation within fandom often extends beyond an interest in any single text to encompass many others within the same genre – other science fiction texts, other stories of male bonding, other narratives which explore the relationship of the outsider to the community. ... Fans, like other consumers of popular culture, read intertextually as well as textually and their pleasure comes through the particular juxtapositions that they create between specific program content and other cultural materials.[30]

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[29] Henry Jenkins, "Television Fans, Poachers, Nomads [1992]" in Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton (eds.). *The Subcultures Reader*, Routledge: New York (1997): 508.
[30] *ibid.* p. 514.

Likewise, any investigation into popular representations of women as sport officials could also benefit from intertextual readings. I will argue that to speak as an official is similar to what Jenkins argues it is to speak as a fan.

> To speak as a fan is to accept what has been labeled a subordinated position within the cultural hierarchy, to accept an identity constantly belittled or criticized by institutional authorities. Yet it is also to speak from a position of collective identity.[31]

Poacher tactics also inform the way in which texts are read. Jenkins suggests that readers can "appropriate popular texts and reread them in a fashion that serves different interests".[32] It is this style of reading, to serve intentioned interests, that works well in this research project. Specifically, as with Jenkins's example of how female fans of *Star Trek* have gained access to a traditionally male-dominated community, I will argue that women officials in particular might benefit from the same strategy.

Methodology & Method

Having outlined the theoretical perspectives that inform this research project overall, I now turn to the methodology and the more specific methods of actually carrying out the work. Centrally, this research project involves a type of discourse analysis. I begin with how I plan to analyze the data I collect, followed by my strategies for actually collecting the data. This outline demonstrates more explicitly what I propose to do and how I propose to do it.

Analyzing Textual Representations

> What discourse analysts do is to produce readings of texts and contexts that are warranted by careful attention to detail and that lend coherence to the discourse being studied.[33]

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[31] *ibid.* p. 507.
[32] *ibid.* p. 508.
[33] Rosalind Gill, "Discourse Analysis" in David Silverman (ed.), *Qualitative Research: Theory, Practice, and Method*, Sage: London (1993): 181.

> As well as examining the way that language is used, discourse analysts must also be sensitive to what is not said – to silences.[34]

Describing the actual process of analyzing discourse is a challenging task. "The skills of discourse analysis do not lend themselves to procedural description."[35] However, this process can be made evident through a brief investigation of those who do work of this type. The following three examples are highly relevant to this research project.

Katherine Jamieson's article, "Reading Nancy Lopez: Decoding Representations of Race, Class, and Sexuality,"[36] offers one example of how texts can be analyzed through a certain discourse.

> As though it were unfolding today, the Lopez story provides a fertile field for analyzing the varied consequences of interlocking inequalities of race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality. Lopez is constructed through the print media as a symbol of assimilation, as well as a body co-opted in the project of Latino-Latina pride and social justice.[37]

Essentially, Jamieson's project is to critique the way in which certain representations of Nancy Lopez situate her within dominant (normalizing) discourses, despite the counter narratives available.

> Moreover, this paper illustrates how the Latino-Latina print media contested the dominant constructions of Lopez's family origin and paid little attention to her roles as mother and wife. This paper concludes with a statement about the usefulness of decoding texts from varied and shifting standpoints, as well as the significance of using multiple historical and political discourses to uncover widely varied meanings of a singular event.[38]

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[34] *ibid.* p. 180.
[35] *ibid.* p. 177.
[36] Katherine M. Jamieson, "Reading Nancy Lopez: Decoding Representations of Race, Class, and Sexuality," *Sociology of Sport Journal 15* (1998): 343-358.
[37] *ibid.* p. 343.
[38] *ibid.* p. 344.

The discourse analysis in this study is modeled closely on Jamieson's work in several ways. One of these ways is as a model for constructing a corpus of texts. The reasons behind my choices of texts are largely influenced by the effectiveness of Jamieson's choice to read varied, and even competing, representations through specific discourses, as also suggested by Jenkins's poaching strategy. Second, I see great benefit to situating the focus of inquiry on representations of a particular individual or phenomenon – in this case – women basketball officials.

A second example of how to analyze representations can be seen in Darcy C. Plymire's "Too Much, Too Fast, Too Soon: Chinese Women Runners, Accusations of Steroid Use, and the Politics of American Track and Field"[39], which demonstrates what can be revealed via a "qualitative discourse analysis."[40] In response to the remarkable achievements by Chinese track and field athletes in 1993, American journalists "responded with shock and outrage."[41] Although there were no positive tests for steroid use by any of the Chinese athletes in question, the American media insisted that these unprecedented results could only be the result of illegal drug use.

> A qualitative discourse analysis of stories written by these journalists revealed that the case against the Chinese was made by privileging the voices of Western European and American athletes, coaches, and sport scientists, and discrediting the Chinese athletes and coaches.[42]

This article is particularly useful to my own research in that its focus is on how certain speakers are privileged within a discourse and the strategies that enable this

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[39] Darcy C. Plymire, "Too much, Too Fast, Too Soon: Chinese Women Runners, Accusations of Steroid Use, and the Politics of American Track and Field," *Sociology of Sport Journal 16.* (1999): 155-173.
[40] *ibid.* p. 155.
[41] *ibid*
[42] *ibid*

privilege. If you recall, my own interests lie in determining who gets legitimated within the discourse of the 'good official'.

A third, and perhaps the most directly related example is the work of Mary McDonald. As a cultural critic, McDonald has an exceptional ability to evince what is hidden, silent, or omitted within certain discourses. Bringing these "silences" to the forefront allows for a "de-naturalizing"[43] of the seemingly natural, and identifying locations of *power/knowledge* within discourses.

> Through postfeminist discourses, the visible model of elite competitive sport is naturalized, while gender ideologies flourish, thus further limiting challenges to the dominant masculine values of both sport and the wider culture.[44]

In "The Marketing of the Women's National Basketball Association and the Making of Postfeminism", McDonald interrogates one of the multiple meanings that emerge from the marketing strategies of the WNBA.[45] McDonald's critique is based on a close reading (analysis) of the discourses invoked through representations put forward in the WNBA's marketing campaign. This type of work is not merely commentary, but extremely political in its analysis.

Because of the enormity of the project to "interrogate the multiple meanings" that these representations generate, McDonald suggests more manageable projects to begin such an interrogation. "[I]t is advisable that future analyses expand this focus to explore other important issues more fully,"[46] which is precisely the objective of my own research.

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[43] *cf.*,., Linda Hutcheon, "Postmodernist Representation" in *Politics of the Postmodern*, Routledge: New York (1989): 31.
[44] Mary McDonald, "The Marketing of the Women's National Basketball Association and the Making of Postfeminism," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport.* Volume 35 Number 1 (2000): 41.
[45] *ibid.* p. 45.
[46] *ibid.*

Compare my own research question to the following suggestion as a potential starting-point for further research to follow McDonald's.

> A potential fruitful starting-point for such an investigation would be to examine how African-American and white women's physical capabilities are represented, given the existing racial and racist reasoning in men's professional sport and wider culture.[47]

My intention to examine how representations of women basketball officials, within a discourse of hegemonic masculinity in contemporary sport and society, create alternative possibilities for continued and future participation by women as sport officials falls nicely in line with McDonald's suggestion for future avenues of research.

Corpus Construction

There are three specific sources for representations of women officials that I am interested in analyzing. These I categorize as *popular*, *technical*, and *trade* publications. All three types of publications provide representations of women sport officials from varied perspectives.

Popular representations consist of discussions about officials, women officials, or women in sport more generally, as well as examples of masculine hegemony within popular media sources. By popular media sources I am referring to publications directed to the mainstream public. These include magazines, newspapers, and electronic media sources. Of all of the potential sources within this category, I am particularly interested in those publications that issued responses to the hiring of Kantner and Palmer by the NBA. Here I am referring to *Sports Illustrated, Sports Illustrated for Women*, and any relevant newspaper articles such as those in the *Dallas Morning News*, the Associated Press, and online sports sources such as the Canadian *tsn.ca* and *sportsnet.ca*.

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[47] *ibid.*

Any texts that discuss the training and development of officials are considered *technical* representations. These technical documents (i.e. training manuals) offer an insight into the construction of 'good' officials, since these texts emphasize the disciplines and technologies that go into creating both men and women as 'good' officials. I also read these, as with the other, texts carefully for indications of masculinist/phallocentric emphases, and more specifically for references to a discourse of hegemonic masculinity. As a final source of technical texts related to women officials, I would also like to examine referee training manuals such as those issued by the NCAA and FIBA in the form of rule books and mechanics manuals.[48]

Most notable of the *trade* publications is *Referee* magazine. Of this publication, I am particularly interested in the issues from 1996, the year prior to Kantner and Palmer's entrance into the NBA, to 1998, the year after. *Referee* magazine is valuable since it is a publication about sport officials, written by sport officials. This is why I classify this as a trade publication – it is a referee-specific publication. There are many other sources in which trade representations can be identified. Several officials associations publish their own newsletters. And several associations also maintain online forums in which referees from around the world discuss situations specific to their sports. Investigating how members of a community (in this case of officials) write about women officials from their own privileged perspective will reveal nuances not found in popular accounts. How do women officials influence this community? How do these trade representations influence the formation of subject positions beyond the scope of this community? An analysis of this corpus of texts will provide insight into the many questions like these that arise through a skeptical reading.

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[48] Mechanics are the formal systems of court coverage for officials.

As the "poaching" strategy suggests, I am especially interested in similarities and differences between trade, technical, and popular accounts. How are women officials represented differently in popular media than in texts specific to officials? More generally, how are all officials, man or woman, represented in these various texts? This brings to light another aspect of what types of texts are provided by the media. Since interviews are rare with officials, the most routine texts in reference to officials come when they have performed poorly in the opinion of a coach or player. Despite fines for publicly criticizing officials, this has not deterred coaches like Phil Jackson or players like Shaquille O'Neal or Allen Iverson from openly criticizing the officiating staff of the NBA. In the 2001-2002 NBA Preview Issue of *Sports Illustrated* there is an article devoted to "SHAQ versus the Refs", in which the "problem" of Shaq's combined size, strength, and athletic ability poses for the NBA's officiating staff.[49] One must take this type of vilifying text into consideration as exemplary of sportswriters privileging their own voices, and those of players and coaches, when representing officials in the media.

Hegemonic Masculinity

According to Miller, "most critical research into men and sport draws its inspiration from the idea that we live in an age of 'hegemonic masculinity' (HM)."[50] Miller traces the history of this concept from Gramsci's notion of hegemony to the work of Robert W. Connell, who applies the notion of unsolicited consent in Gramsci's ideal of hegemony to studies in gender relations, particularly to masculinity. Connell brings our attention to several manifestations of men's desires for power and domination. Of course there are the obvious manifestations of sexism, such as "rape, domestic violence, and

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[49] Jack McCallum, "Shaq vs. the Refs," *Sports Illustrated*, Volume 95 No. 17 (29/11/01): 82-88.
[50] Toby Miller. *Sportsex.* p. 47.

obstacles to women's occupational advancement," to the more "subtle 'tactics' of domination, such as the exclusion of women from social environments and sports teams and lopsided media interest in the lives and bodies of men."[51]

Miller points out that Connell's model "seems to fit sports' ideological apparatus" quite well, since "aggression, bodily force, competition, and physical skill are primarily associated with straight maleness."[52] However, although masculinity may appear most uncontested in the sporting arena, that is not necessarily the case. While many theorists, including several I cited earlier, argue that masculinity is dominant in sport and the broader culture as well, Miller wants to problematize this seeming domination.

As with others who theorize masculinity, Miller notes that investigation into masculinity, particularly hegemonic masculinity, is a rather slippery slope. Hegemonic masculinity oppresses women and men who are excluded from its norms. Yet, "even 'subscribers' may find its norms unattainable."[53] The most interesting item, for me, is how the strongest proponents of hegemonic masculinity, the ones for whom this model has the greatest appeal, are the men who feel the most vulnerable or weak. Although not exclusively, working class, minority, and immigrant men particularly find it preferable to join the struggle against women and gays, rather than against the more likely "sources of their powerlessness … the monetary and racial economy."[54] It is this subscription to the often-misguided ideals that hegemonic masculinity offers that I find the most interesting. I also find this useful in that it allows me to further demonstrate the complexity of hegemonic masculinity by reading representations of women officials through the

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[51] *ibid.* p. 48.
[52] *ibid.*
[53] *ibid.* p. 49.
[54] *ibid*

associated discourses of racism and homophobia. Since HM applies to so relatively few individuals, adhering to its norms is often futile, and it continually struggles and falls short of accounting for difference, it is a wonder how it maintains any support at all.

With sport being such a graphic and prevalent part of our culture, and with sporting icons actively putting out homophobic and misogynist texts, consumers of this culture become wrapped up in its tropes. This is precisely why I feel it is essential to read representations of officials through the discourse of hegemonic masculinity. Through public examination and the offering of alternate readings of women officials in sport, consumers will have newly formed options for their own ways of being and speaking in relation to this phenomenon. Or to quote Stuart Hall on the purpose of theorizing this concept:

> The purpose of theorizing is not to enhance one's intellectual or academic reputation but to enable us to grasp, understand, and explain – to produce a more adequate knowledge of – the historical world and its processes; and thereby to inform our practice so that we may transform it.[55]

Return to the initial narrative about Karen Lasuik's response to the celebration of her ability as a basketball official. Her attempt to disregard the role gender plays in her life as an official and beyond to me indicates how heavily informed she is by the discourse of hegemonic masculinity. The officials associations that rewarded Karen for her accomplishments did so based on her sex and publicly performed gender. However, it is her exceptional ability to throw these markers off as she performs her duties as an official that have allowed her to achieve the very things she was being recognized for. She was recognized for two reasons. One is because of her ability as an official, but

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[55] Stuart Hall, "The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism among the Theorists" in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, University of Illinois Press: Urbana (1988): 36.

primarily because she is a woman. The paradox here is that being a 'good' official implicitly requires that she "act like a man" on the court. The analyses in Chapter Three helps to demonstrate what I mean by women necessarily "acting like men" to be seen as successful basketball officials.

Summary

Why?

Hopefully it is apparent that there are some serious questions that can be answered through this research. To offer alternative readings of the ways women officials are represented in the media and elsewhere should allow for individuals to make some different choices in how they participate within this culture. Not only will alternate readings open various possibilities for women who officiate basketball or any other sport, they should open possibilities for men as well. Perhaps women can participate in domains they never thought possible before. Perhaps women officials will be better able to negotiate their lives on the court and who they are away from it. But perhaps most important of all, maybe men and women can find new ways of being that are not confined by the current definitions of masculinity and/or femininity. Perhaps a new way can emerge for gendered subjects to relate to each other and the world around us all. And with any luck, there will be no need for either category to define itself by subjugating the other.

Chapter Organization

This first chapter provides the theoretical and methodological framework for the entire project. While this project has seen several changes from inception to completion, the theoretical and methodological framework have remained the same. The method of

my analysis is to propose alternative readings to the representations of officials found in a variety of sources. It should also be clear that each reading is only one potential reading out of undoubtedly countless other possibilities. Whether it is reading basketball players and officials as heroes and villains respectively, or reading a woman official through the legacy of slavery, these are merely potential readings. Ultimately, I hope these alternative readings sufficiently challenge and complicate the more assumed, taken-for-granted readings, resulting in more room to move for all affected sport participants/subjects.

"Chapter Two: The *Making* of the Good Official", is firmly based on the work of Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*[56], and Debra Shogan's application of this work in *The Making of High Performance Athletes*.[57] In order to speak about the interruptions to the Good Official, it is imperative to lay out the discourse that first establishes what the Good Official is. I begin by describing the technologies that go into producing the Good Official. Being that this training of Good Officials is very similar to those that go into the production of high performance athletes, coaches, or as Foucault indicates, any docile body, this helps my larger project of legitimating the Good Official as a valid sport participant.

In addition to the technologies that produce the Good Official, Chapter Two also analyzes the discourse that privileges certain attributes as indicative of those that constitute 'good' officials. Through an examination of the desirable qualities of the Good Official, the hegemonic masculinity within the discourse becomes evident. Once the

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[56] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan, Vintage Books: New York (1977).
[57] Debra Shogan, *The Making of High Performance Athletes: Discipline, Diversity, and Ethics*, University of Toronto Press: Toronto (1999).

discourse of the Good Official has been laid out, HM and its associated whiteness revealed, we are ready to see what happens when the Good Official is challenged by competing discourses.

"Chapter Three: The Good Official ... Interrupted", is precisely as the title suggests. It is an analysis of the rupture introduced to the discourse of the Good Official when the official in question is also a woman. Through this chapter, it is evident that the category of 'woman' is sufficient to disrupt the masculinity of the Good Official. Likewise, those women who achieve success as officials undergo a similar challenge to conventional womanhood by embodying the trademarks of the Good Official. In this chapter, I provide three readings of women's participation as elite officials. The first analysis is centered in the explicit attempt to make women officials "one of the guys" in order to effectively pass as a 'good' official. The second examines another tactic for accomplishing the same goal. In this case it is a refusal of gender rather than an overt conformity to masculine ideals. However, the end result, I argue, is the same. The third is an analysis of how women's participation as officials continues to be subordinated through the workings of homophobia.

The fourth and final reading in this chapter is of Violet Palmer through the legacy of slavery and racism. The fact that Palmer remains the only woman to officiate men's professional sport at the highest level makes her a noteworthy subject on its own. The fact that Palmer is a black woman makes her an even more complicated site for investigation, especially due to the implicit whiteness of officiating outlined in the second chapter. Reading Palmer through different stereotypes of black women, it is possible to

see how she has managed to be accepted and respected as an NBA official; thus, posing perhaps the single greatest interruption to the discourse of the Good Official.

The fourth chapter, "Superheroes and Villains – Finding Meaning in the Good Official", is written as a continuation of the discussion in Chapter Two, making Chapter Three a literal and virtual interruption. Central to this chapter are the two primary ways that officials are represented outside of their own circles. In the second chapter we see the discursive formation of the Good Official, but it needs to be noted that this takes place almost exclusively within referee-specific literature. Outside of this, in the popular media, officials get established as something much different. Reading representations of officials as either dismissible or as villains supports my claim that the Good Official is really only meaningful to referees. To the remaining majority of sport participants, the Good Official does not meaningfully exist. To them, officials are not even legitimate enough as sport participants to speak about what they do. The voice for officials comes not from officials themselves, but from the other, highly validated participants (e.g., players, coaches, fans, and sportswriters).

Officials are highly complicit in their silence, however. Through the discursive production of the Good Official, we find a certain political economy to remaining silent and/or invisible. While this does have its usefulness, it does not do much to counter the rather negative representations that get perpetuated as a result, only further subordinating officials as legitimate sport participants. This chapter also juxtaposes different "masculinities". The normative/conventional masculinity that is dominant within the discourse of the Good Official is compared and contrasted with the hypermasculinity that is dominant within the NBA. As hegemonic masculinity maintains its status by

subordinating alternative masculinities, through this investigation it becomes clear that masculinity is not an uncontested domain. The capital different masculinities carry is contingent upon the dominance or privilege of one discourse over another. In the NBA, the dominant masculinity does not always equate with the masculinity of the Good Official. The conventional masculinity of the Good Official, while dominant or hegemonic within this discourse, does not necessarily have the same meaning in the competing and overlapping discourses of the NBA.

The final chapter, "The Good Official ... Recuperated", is about the appearance of the Good Official outside of referee-specific conversations as a result of women's participation at the elite levels. Prior to this, discussions about the Good Official are almost non-existent in the popular media. Women's participation as officials interrupts the dominant discourse of the Good Official within referee circles. However, it is this same interruption that simultaneously makes it possible for the Good Official to enter into conversations by the greater sporting community – thus providing hope that officials can be accepted as valid, legitimate sport participants – without the need to vilify or dismiss them from conversations.

Chapter Two:
The *Making* of the Good Official

> The signs for recognizing those most suited to this profession are a lively, alert manner, an erect head, a taut stomach, broad shoulders, long arms, strong fingers, a small belly, thick thighs, slender legs and dry feet, because a man of such a figure could not fail to be agile and strong ...[58]

Although this quote refers to the "ideal figure" for a seventeenth century soldier, it almost equally applies to the "ideal figure" for contemporary basketball officials. Presently, much emphasis is placed on "the look" of a good official. However, simple aesthetics are not the sole root of this emphasis, but rather it is a measure of the extent to which the subject has been tempered or disciplined as a good official. Obviously, not all of the characteristics outlined above correlate with the look of an official. What should become evident through this chapter is that the technologies of space, time, and modality of movement, or "discipline", is employed to create good officials, just as it is to produce any other type of "docile body".

What I hope to accomplish in this chapter is an overview of the discipline and the *power/knowledge* relations involved with producing "good" basketball officials. This is necessary for two main reasons. First of all, it is important in this project to establish referees as valid sport participants by fostering an understanding that officials do not just "walk off the street" but are actually highly trained and thoroughly disciplined subjects. While this holds true for many sport officials, my focus is on basketball officials. Refereeing basketball at elite levels requires a great deal of training and experience, all of which parallel the other participants at these levels. Without a solid understanding of the process of creating elite officials, it is much easier to either vilify or simply dismiss them,

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[58] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan, Vintage Books: New York (1977): 135.

as happens frequently within sport-related conversations. The second main reason for describing the development of the good basketball official is to demonstrate the "inherent" masculinity of this project. Much like the seventeenth century soldier, and even modern athletes, the making of good officials is often highly equated with the making of "men".

What are the markers that identify a good official? As I mentioned earlier, good officials are *not* simply individuals taken off the street and placed on the court, nor are they simply individuals in a uniform with a whistle. In *Sports Illustrated's* 2001 NBA Preview Issue, Jack McCallum's article, "Shaq vs. The Refs"[59], includes staged photos of interactions between Los Angeles Lakers' star center, Shaquille O'Neal, and an unidentified "referee". While it is obvious these are staged photographs, at first glance it could be Shaq and an actual referee. Or could it? Clearly, for the sake of the article, the magazine staff felt it necessary to stage such photographs to help illustrate the main points. However, while they felt it necessary to photograph the "real" Shaquille O'Neal who, apart from Michael Jordan, might be the most recognizable individual in the National Basketball Association (NBA), they did not find it necessary to photograph a "real" NBA official. The "referee" in question does appear in the NBA issue grey jersey with blue pinstripes and red and blue collar and cuffs. He is also wearing black, beltless pants, black shoes, and has the Classic Fox 40 whistle in his mouth. This young, black, male model appears strong, fit, and very well groomed. The "ideal" of what a good official should look like. So what is wrong with this picture?

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[59] Jack McCallum, "Shaq vs. the Refs", *Sports Illustrated,* Volume 95 Number 17 (29/11/01): 82-88.

First of all, the caption in small print beside the image indicates that, "The guy in stripes isn't really a ref, but those who are have to get a grip on the question of when to whistle the bruising O'Neal."[60] The photo shows the "ref" clinging to the muscular left arm of Shaq, obviously to play on this "getting a grip" theme addressed in the article. However, even in a fight situation, it is unlikely that you would ever see a referee clinging to a player in such a manner. Secondly, there are some subtle indicators that this is not an actual referee. Most noticeable is the wristwatch. In basketball at all levels, there is an official timekeeper. The officials on the court have no need to wear a wristwatch, nor are they allowed to wear a watch, or jewelry of any kind for that matter. In the other staged photo for the article, another slight error is visible. This is an error an untrained eye could easily miss, but to a referee it is a glaring violation of official dress code---the "ref" is wearing white socks!

The final point to emphasize that this is not a "real" official, and especially that it is not a "good" official, is the wide-eyed look of fear on the face of the supposed referee. As he clings to the bulging arm of the giant man beside him, his eyes are wide open, expressing an emotion of either fear or great concern. As you will see from subsequent discussion about the construction of good officials, fear is one emotion that has no place being expressed by a good referee. In fact, a certain "fearlessness" is extolled as one of the virtues of some of the elite referees I examine in greater detail.

The fact that the magazine staff did not feel it was necessary to include images of actual referees in the article (the two staged photos are the *only* images of referees in the article) is an issue for further discussion later. The point that is important to make here is that good officials are recognizable by their disciplined appearance. Policing the

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[60] *ibid.* p. 82.

appearance of officials is one of the many disciplining technologies that go into producing good officials. The discussion that follows is an overview of some of these technologies.

Soldier, Athlete, Official, and Other Docile Bodies: Discursive Formation of "The Good"

> Here I believe one's point of reference should not be the great model of language (*langue*) and signs, but to that of war and battle. The history which bears and determines us has the form of war rather than that of language: relations of power, not relations of meaning.[61]

The production of any docile body involves the manipulation of space, time, and modality of movement. These procedures are perhaps best described by Michel Foucault in his multiple works on various subjects.[62] However, Foucault's model is also expertly applied to the production of athletes in Debra Shogan's *The Making of High Performance Athletes: Discipline, Diversity, and Ethics*.[63] Like Foucault's accounts of other disciplinary technologies, Shogan offers a "relentless itemization of the detail of sport discipline that is illustrative of the relentlessness of sport discipline itself."[64] The project of "relentless itemization" of the specific disciplinary technologies producing elite basketball officials would be redundant, and is not central to this thesis. However, a brief account of some of the technologies can serve two purposes here. First, it is both interesting and useful to reveal some of the mechanisms that produce good officials. Knowing the mechanics of a good golf swing can be beneficial for both golfers and non-golfers alike. For the golfer, knowledge of a correct swing can improve one's ability to

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[61] Michel Foucault, *Power/knowledge*, Harvester: Brighton (1980): 114-115.
[62] For my purposes here, I focus almost exclusively on Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan, Vintage Books: New York (1977).
[63] Debra Shogan, *The Making of High Performance Athletes: Discipline, Diversity, and Ethics*, University of Toronto Press: Toronto (1999).
[64] *ibid.* p. 19.

achieve that ideal--- the good swing. For non-golfers, that same knowledge can produce an appreciation for the discipline and practice that is evident in those who do have a good swing. This is my intention here in reproducing some of the knowledge that goes into the production of good officials. Second, when we become aware of the "why" of what we are doing, it often helps us to make better sense of what we do, and can often help us to do whatever that is better. To stick with the golf example, when one recognizes that distance, accuracy, and consistency can all be attained by performing a correct golf swing, then achieving that correct swing can become a goal for the individual. When one understands the particular methods that can help to repeatedly produce that good swing, then certain skill development drills can make sense to the individual, despite how fragmented or distant they may seem from the actual or whole movement of a correct swing. Just like breaking down, or compartmentalizing, movements of a correct golf swing can lead to specific drills to achieve better performance, so too can the "skills" of basketball officiating be broken down in the same manner. The result can be "better" knowledge about producing good officials, as well as "making sense" of current practices. In addition, better understanding this basic knowledge can also allow for adaptation to new environments and/or demands.

For basketball officials, the organization of space is largely determined by the constraints designed for the game of basketball. The space in which officials operate is the same, and yet quite different than that of players, coaches, timers, scorers, spectators, and media. How can this operational space be both the same and different? In two ways really. Primarily, the demands of each participant within this space are different. Spectators are required to remain seated or away from the playing surface as not to

interfere with the primary function of this space---to play a basketball game. Coaches and substitutes are also required to remain off of the actual playing surface, but are allowed much greater proximity and movement in the court area. Players are confined to the actual playing surface marked by the boundary lines. The normalized movement within this space is much greater for officials than all of the other participants mentioned, which is in direct relation to the demands of their job. The other way in which this same space is differentiated for officials is based on their own system of segmentation. Just as players and coaches "partition" space within the confines of the court surface, so too do officials. And just as players are required to do this to achieve the goals of the game, so too are officials, despite the fact that these goals are very different.

Any basketball competition that takes place within the confines of this general space places certain spatial constraints on all of the participants involved. These constraints are both limiting and enabling for different participants. The boundaries marking the playing surface both limit the space for the players to move, while simultaneously making it possible (enabling) this game to take place in its current format. Without these boundaries, the game of basketball could not be intelligible in its present form. As for all other participants within this space, the spatial constraints simultaneously limit and enable officials.

Despite the fact that officials are responsible for the policing of the boundaries laid out within the rules of the game, they are also limited by the conventions established for officials. Officials are responsible for the safety of all participants in a gymnasium during a contest. In larger venues, some of this responsibility is deferred to or shared with security or event staff. However, during any given contest, officials may be

required to enter the stands to deal with a disruptive fan, attend the scorer's bench area, a team bench area, and of course, be on the playing surface to officiate the actual play. But, even though officials have greater range of normal movement than most other participants around the entire venue, they are still subject to certain spatial constraints.

During periods of play, players are confined to the playing surface or subject to a violation of the rules; coaches are restricted to their team bench area or "coach's box"; and game officials are also required to be in close proximity to the play on the court. As good as the view seems from the stands, conventional demands require officials to be a certain proximity to the players to effectively judge infractions. These demands also require that they move to maintain this proximity on and around the court. It would be unthinkable to see a referee evaluate the play on the court from several rows into the bleachers. Likewise, it would be just as absurd to see an official stationary in a chair while play was going on. Officials in other sports are not necessarily subject to the same constraints as basketball officials. Tennis umpires are seated high above the net at center court. However, officials in dynamic, contact sports do share some of these similarities. Officials in hockey and football, for example, are also required to maintain proximity to play that covers a large area, while at the same time avoiding interference with the players as they move quickly around the playing surface. In order to accomplish this sometimes-conflicting task, officials organize space within the playing area to suit their own needs.

> One must eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions, the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals, their diffuse circulation, their unusable and dangerous coagulation; ... [*partitioning's*] aim was to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to set up useful

> communications, ... to be able at each moment to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits.[65]

While Foucault's intention in the preceding quote is to describe the role of *partitioning* in the factory, as much as the monastery, military, schools, and hospitals, it can equally apply to sport (basketball) and officiating. Just as coaches might use "confined space"[66] drills in practice situations to simultaneously develop skills (increase productivity) in their athletes while enabling constant supervision and assessment of the demonstrated skills, so too do officials partition space, or individuals in space. One of the first things a new official learns is where to look on the court. With a playing surface 94 feet long and 50 feet wide[67] and ten players moving rapidly around this space, it is important that each official knows what specific aspects of the game to monitor closely. Without partitioning the playing area, effective surveillance and evaluation of the players could not occur.

Officials partition the playing court into primary areas of responsibility. This allows for effective surveillance and evaluation of play within that area, effective communication between officials, and it eliminates unnecessary "overlap" in surveillance and communication. For example, often the offensive player controlling the ball and his or her defender will be isolated on a specified section of the court. This allows for one-on-one penetration to the basket for a scoring attempt, while the remaining four offensive players run through designed patterns of screens and/or ball cuts to free up one of the offensive players from their defender and produce an alternate scoring opportunity. Even

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[65] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish, p.* 143.
[66] Shogan, p. 21.
[67] FIBA (International Basketball Federation), *Official Basketball Rules for Men and Women (1998-2002)*, FIBA (International Basketball Federation): Munchen, Germany (1998).

with three officials on the court, because of the complexity of these situations, violations or fouls would be missed without partitioning. If more than one official is watching the ball carrier and his/her defender, then there are fewer sets of eyes watching the more complex situations on a different part of the court. If all of the officials are watching the "off ball" movement, then no one is watching the ball carrier. If this is the case, and there is an infraction, either by the offensive or defensive player, then no call will be made. If the same infraction occurred with more than one official watching those players, then the possibility of two or more calls could be made. Because of the angle at which a certain official might witness a play, or for the duration of time one was watching the play, the same contact (infraction) could result in two different calls. To ensure consistency and accuracy, officials learn early on that refereeing play within one's primary area of responsibility is paramount. This is primarily how officials manipulate space to ensure effective officiating occurs in the confined but functional space of a basketball game. This is also why you should only see one official reporting a call even if two may blow their whistle to signal an infraction.

Signaling infractions also has much to do with the temporal and sequential organization of officiating. Once an infraction is noticed by an official, a specific sequence of events begins to take place. Different from other contact sports (i.e., hockey), the whistle is blown for infractions immediately by the official. The ensuing bodily movements will be addressed briefly later, but the timing and sequence of these movements is essential to effective communication. The official should not excessively delay the signal. Simultaneous with the whistle, a signal is made to indicate foul or violation. Violations are reported visibly to all participants at the site of the infraction,

and play resumes quickly. Fouls, on the other hand, are not always visibly reported at the site of contact, but the official moves deliberately to a point visible by the scorer to report a series of information. Was there a basket scored or disallowed? This is the first information reported. Who committed the foul and what foul was committed? Are there substitutes waiting to enter the game? Does either team wish for a time out? Every time an official approaches the scorer's table to report a foul, this is the sequence of events. Good officials strictly adhere to this sequence, but perhaps the most fascinating relationship between officials and time is the duration of an official's authority.

Just as an official's authority ends at the walls confining the space of the contest, the duration of an official's authority has a distinct beginning and end. Again, it is unlikely that anyone thinks that elite players and coaches simply walk in minutes prior to a contest. The temporal constraints for athletes include more than the 40-48 minutes of an average game. There is the warm-up prior to the contest of course, but even prior to that there can be scheduled team meetings, therapy sessions, taping joints, team meals, and several other demands that can be scheduled for athletes. The same holds true for officials.

The first item mentioned in the *FIBA Handbook (1998-2002): Rules, Cases, and Mechanics*[68], involves arrival time at the game venue and the sequence of events leading up to the start of the game.

> It is strongly advised that Officials arrive at the venue of the game at least one hour before the scheduled starting time and, upon arrival, report to the dressing room.

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[68] FIBA (International Basketball Federation), *FIBA Handbook (1998-2002): Rules, Cases, and Mechanics*, FIBA (International Basketball Federation): Munchen, Germany (1998).

> They should prepare properly for each game, that is, be in the best physical and mental condition possible. All meals should be completed at least 4 hours before game time.[69]

Without going into "relentless" description of the entire pre-game responsibilities of officials, it is clearly evident that the temporal constraints begin well in advance of the contest, as many as five hours prior with the preparation and consumption of the final prescribed meal. The constraints are then intensified at the one hour mark prior to game time, when officials are required to be on site and preparing for the contest.

Official jurisdiction begins as many as 30 minutes and as few as 20 minutes prior to the opening jump ball. It is at this time that the officials' authority over the space of the contest begins. The power to police the environment of the game, as well as the game itself is now embodied in the official. All of the freedom of movement, in addition to the many rights and freedoms too numerous to mention here, that come with this power are sustained until the end of playing time when the official exits the playing area. Once the referee has verified that the final score is correct, and the officials leave the gymnasium or playing area, the contest is finished. While there may be a few additional responsibilities for officials, as is the case with professional referees, the authority of an official ends with his or her departure from the court at the end of playing time.

Modality of movement is largely a combination of some of these spatial and temporal constraints. Someone watching Tiger Woods swing a golf club and watching my own attempt at doing the same should easily be able to distinguish the skilled from the unskilled performance. This is because a correct golf swing is a combination of several elements, such as where and how to stand in relation to the golf ball, and the correct sequence and timing of movements that result in an effective ball strike.

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[69] *ibid.*

Likewise, in a group of marching soldiers, it should be easy to identify one individual who is "out of step" or not properly disciplined in the mechanics of correct marching. As shown previously, officials are subject to a great deal of discipline in where, when, and how to be. In effect, the referee is like any other docile body in that it can be, and as I have demonstrated actually is, "subjected, used, transformed and improved."[70] But this is not the end product. A 'good' referee requires further distinction yet. This comes through correct training.

As Shogan points out in *The Making of High Performance Athletes*:

> It is not enough for coaches to know how to distribute individuals in time and space, say, in an offensive system or to know how to developmentally produce athletic bodies to fit these roles. A coach must also know who is most skilled for a particular competition or situation.[71]

Again, the same holds true for officials. It is not simply enough to produce officials who know how, when, and where to be on the court during a game. Athletic competitions have incredibly complex and diverse demands. Just because a soldier knows how to keep boots polished, march in rank, and fire a rifle, does not mean that this individual will perform as required or expected on the battlefield. Comparing, as often occurs, between war and the sporting contest, not all disciplined, docile bodies, whether soldier, athlete, or official, perform as required or expected. Like the soldier who "freezes" when required to fire at the enemy in battle, athletes *and* officials can also freeze in competition. Only those who have received correct training are more likely to produce the desired results in competition.

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[70] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 136.
[71] Shogan, p. 35.

> The success of disciplinary power derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments; hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination.[72]

Elite basketball officials undergo comprehensive correct training via the formats mentioned above. Particularly, in the Canadian context, the following processes of correct training are ultimately what constitute the 'good' official, or rather---the Good Official. Again, this is not meant to be an exhaustive, nor relentless, description of these processes, merely an introduction and an overview to the technologies that go into producing the Good Official. As we have seen, certain disciplinary technologies have their limits. The control of space, time, and modality can and do produce docile bodies, such as soldiers, athletes, or officials. But it is this extension via correct training that produces "good" soldiers, athletes, and in this case---officials.

> Basketball officiating, like a corporation has a pecking order. There is usually the equivalent of a set of vice presidents, managers, workers and trainees. When someone first joins an officials organization, he or she is considered a trainee. There is usually a set of minimum requirements that must be fulfilled before they can move up to the status of worker. Then, more requirements would have to be satisfied to upgrade to Manager. Last, and most difficult, elevating to Vice President![73]

Once an official has received sufficient training to begin officiating actual games, the identification of "good" officials begins. All officials must demonstrate an adequate understanding of the rules of basketball. They must also know the basics of how, where, and when to be in certain situations on the court. This is covered in their docility training. The next level of training begins with the hierarchical observation of each official by a veteran, or senior, official. This observation begins at the introductory levels of officiating. Even with proper training, the greatest majority of officials begin working

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[72] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 170.

youth basketball. Whether this is junior high or senior high aged athletes, varsity sports are a primary client for officials associations across the country. As it is for athletes, officials too begin at younger age groups and work towards "higher" levels of the sport. School aged basketball leagues are the lowest levels for introducing officials to the sport. As part of the development process, referees at this level are observed/evaluated occasionally to monitor/evaluate their progress as an official. As an individual gains experience, and has been observed several times, advancement to higher levels of basketball becomes possible. This higher level assignment is generally a high school provincial championship tournament, and is often the first exposure an official gets to "constant" observation/evaluation.

Over the course of a regular season, an average high school official receives minimal direct observation. There is usually a mandatory observation by a sanctioned evaluator early in the season, followed only by occasional or requested (by the official) observations. At a championship tournament, in addition to the core of officials assigned to work the tournament, there is also an assigner/evaluator designated to oversee the assignment and evaluation of the tournament officials. This set up is a perfect model of the combination of disciplinary technology's simple instruments of hierarchical observation and normalizing judgment---the examination.[74]

While there is an examination in the more familiar, written sense for all officials each season, the true form of examining officials is during their performance on the court during competitive matches. As with the case of championship tournaments, each official is specifically teamed with other officials and observed, assessed, and ultimately

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[73] Neil W. Aguiar, "Advancing through the ranks", in *Post Play: A publication of the Canadian Association of Basketball Officials*, Volume 33 Issue 28 (May 2002): 6.

judged in each and every performance. The official's performance is judged by the players, coaches, spectators, and his or her partner(s) involved in the game. Games at which an evaluator is present in the stands to specifically judge the official's performance reveal the effects of the power between the evaluator and the official. It is the evaluator who essentially exercises the power of controlling the future performances of each official. If the official demonstrates correct training and can distinguish his or her performance from those of the other official(s) in the game, that official will be rewarded with a more competitive assignment in the next round of the tournament. If the official fails to demonstrate these 'good' qualities, the penalty will most likely be a less important assignment in the next round, if any assignment is given at all. Just as it is for the teams competing in the tournament, officials also want to be in the final or Championship game.

There are many factors that go into deciding who works the final game of a tournament. In fact, it is so complex that a consensus is difficult, if not impossible, to find between top level evaluators. While this is explored to a greater extent later, it should be noted that even though an official may not be assigned to a Championship game, there are other important assignments in every tournament and there are only 2-3 spots maximum in a final game. If more officials than this demonstrate 'good' performances, they would be duly noted and further advancement would still be possible. However, upon a successful performance in a championship tournament at this level, the official may then be considered for assignments at higher levels of basketball. In the Canadian context, the hierarchy of basketball after the high school level is collegiate women's, collegiate men's, university women's, and ultimately university men's basketball. Once at any of these levels, the level of observation moves from the

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[74] See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 184-194.

occasional viewing by an evaluator to continuous evaluation, by both evaluators and peers. At the highest levels of American basketball (i.e., the NCAA and NBA), visibility of officials' performances is increased considerably with nightly analysis of game tape by the officials themselves, as well as league supervisors. So in addition to the thousands of eyes viewing each performance at the most elite levels, detailed video analysis allows for even further scrutiny of an official.

In essence, the evaluation of an official's performance during competition is the ultimate *examination* in the Foucaultian sense.

> The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgment. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them. That is why, in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualized. In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth. At the heart of the procedure of discipline, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected. The superimposition of the power relations and knowledge relations assumes in the examination all its visible brilliance. ... It is not simply at the level of consciousness, of representations and in what one thinks one knows, but at the level of what makes possible the knowledge that is transformed into political investment.[75]

With this relationship established, between both the discipline to create the official and the further technology, the examination, to reveal the "good" official, it should be sufficient to say that the disciplinary technologies are employed in the construction of the Good Official. But, as the quote above suggests, the real level of analysis needs to be performed beyond simple consciousness and merely representations, at the heart of the *power/knowledge* nexus that creates and perpetuates what it means to be a Good Official.

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[75] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 184-185.

The Power to Create: Producing Knowledge and Meaning

The power and knowledge relations that go into constructing the Good Official are incredibly complex. The previous section should have demonstrated the disciplinary technologies that provide the structural framework of the construct of the Good Official. What the previous section did not explore, was the *power/knowledge* nexus that almost "out of nothing" constructs officials and produces Good Officials, and the complicity of subject-object positions in perpetuating these same constructs. Only once this is analyzed can we adequately begin to understand challenges and resistance to these constructs that inevitably occur, especially with the introduction of women officials. This section examines the production of knowledge, the effects of power, and their implications in each other during the discursive formation of the Good Official.

When I speak of knowledge production, what I mean is much more complex. Not only am I speaking about simply producing knowledge, but also of meaning. More than that, I am also speaking of how this knowledge serves to legitimate, validate, or authorize certain speakers within the community of officials. I plan to show how, first of all, the construct of the Good Official is really only meaningful within the community of officials itself; and secondly, what the discourse of the Good Official looks like outside of this specific community, to the sport community at large including players, coaches, administrators, and most significantly---the media.

> Discourse, Foucault argued, never consists of one statement, one text, one action or one source. The same discourse, characteristic of the way of thinking or the state of knowledge at any one time ... will appear across a range of texts, and as a form of conduct, at a number of different institutional sites within society. However, whenever these discursive events 'refer to the same object, share the same style and ... support a strategy ... a common institutional, administrative or

> political drift and pattern' then they are said by Foucault to belong to the same discursive formation.[76]

As mentioned earlier, my intention is to analyze representations of officials, especially women officials, within a variety of source texts. The analysis of the representations occurs at the heart of the *power/knowledge* nexus that makes certain discourses possible. There is a context, historical and social, in which to consider these representations, as they are only meaningful within this context.

The Good Official is not a static, unchanging entity. Contemporary basketball officials have a different set of demands than they did decades ago. For example, as late as the early- to mid-1980s, a university official, along with only one partner, would officiate a contest. As it is today, officials working university games were considered to be this country's best officials. However, times change, and so do the conditions and demands of the sport of basketball. To keep up with these changes, officials too have had to adapt to the evolving demands of their sport. This is exemplified by the adoption of three-official mechanics. Since the bottom of the original peach basket was removed to facilitate speedier play, the game of basketball has been changing, and so have the demands on the referees.

Like any other discursive formation, the constructs of the Good Official look different depending on several variables, not the least of which is the time period being examined. At this point it is also important to reiterate that the cultural context examined here is specifically Canadian. When the most elite Canadian university officials might work fewer than 30 games per season at that level, compared to over 80 games their

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[76] Stuart Hall citing Cousins and Hussain (1994): 84-85, in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Sage Publications: London (1997): 44.

American counterparts might work, there are some obvious differences to be accounted for. Division I NCAA men's officials in the United States can also make in excess of US$1000 per game[77], whereas the Canadian Interuniversity official makes less than CDN$200. There are a few Canadian officials who work elite US basketball leagues, such as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA). Other than International Amateur Basketball Federation (FIBA) sanctioned international events (i.e., the Olympics), the top level for Canadian officials is Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS). American referees can make officiating a vocation; very few Canadians, if any, can do the same.

Having noted a mere few of the differences between Canadian and American elite basketball officials, it should also be noted that there is also considerable overlap. Canadian officials are required to be incredibly diverse. A university-level official in Western Canada is required to know at least two different sets of rules (FIBA-modified and NCAA Men's-modified) and two sets of mechanics (2-person and 3-person). Canadian Colleges Athletics Association (CCAA) women play FIBA-modified rules and two-person mechanics, CCAA and CIS men play NCAA Men's-modified rules and three person mechanics, while CIS women play the FIBA-modified rules with three-person floor mechanics. While it is true that NCAA basketball has both men's and women's rules and mechanics, the differences are relatively few and minor compared to the differences between NCAA and FIBA rules, two- and three-person mechanics. In addition, while the NBA is the pinnacle of men's professional basketball on the globe, referees at that level are both recruited and trained by the NBA. These officials *only*

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[77] David Teel, "Pt. 2 - Playing the whistle game: officiating is Kersey's labor of love" in "Bryan Kersey: Six games in six days" [3 pt. Series], *The Daily Press*, The Daily Press: Hampton (30/03/01).

work the one set of rules and mechanics during their season. This would also be the same for top WNBA and many Division I NCAA Men's referees. And while this initially seems like another difference between Canadian and American officials, which it is, it is this difference that establishes one of the most notable *power/knowledge* relationships in the constitution of a good official in Canada.

Very few Canadian elite basketball games are nationally televised. However, during their respective seasons, one can watch any of a number of NCAA Division I men's, NBA, or WNBA games. In addition, televised coverage of Canada's own NBA team, the Toronto Raptors, is currently seriously threatened because of a lack of interested networks willing to pay for the broadcast rights and other timeslot commitments during the playoffs. Presently, the only network willing and able to televise a significant number of regular season and playoff games is the Raptors' own digital station, *Raptor TV*, but distribution is a major concern, because nationally "subscriptions to sports digital channels are only about 5% of the subscriptions to specialty channels on basic cable."[78] This can easily speak volumes about where the sport of basketball sits on the priority list of Canadian networks. When potential late season reruns of *Friends* or *Frazier* are more important to a national network like Global than a Raptor playoff game, basketball cannot be in too high of demand in Canada outside of Toronto. With the visibility of elite Canadian basketball very low in the media, the primary source of elite basketball comes via American networks carrying American elite basketball. Almost by default, this establishes American basketball, and therefore its officials, as superior to the Canadian game and its officials.

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[78] William Houston, *The Globe and Mail*, Bell Globe Media: Toronto (19/06/02): S2.

This stands to reason. Top level American officials referee professionally. Very few Canadian officials can say the same. So it only makes sense that featured guest evaluators and clinicians at elite Canadian officiating camps are those from the elite leagues in the United States.

> "They're untouchable," Kersey says of the elite [NCAA] officials. "They have so much respect from the coaches, they can get out of any situation. That's where you want to be."[79]

The wealth of knowledge that comes from officiating basketball at its highest levels for a profession is too rich a resource to ignore for even the elite Canadian officials. So the production of knowledge about what constitutes a Good Official also has a strong nationalistic component. The power relationships associated with this knowledge then also have this same component. American basketball is privileged over the Canadian game, and so too are its officials. Canadians striving to be good officials necessarily embody this knowledge by putting it into practice as part of their own officiating styles.

Supplemental information is also available to sport officials, regardless of sport or nationality, through referee-specific publications such as *Referee*[80] magazine, and officials association publications, primarily in the form of newsletters. While the information and knowledge passed on directly by elite referees to those motivated and financially-able individuals who regularly attend elite clinics and camps is invaluable, it is also more difficult to capture as usable text. This next section explores the discursive formation of good officials within more accessible textual material. Specifically, *Referee* magazine, Canadian Association of Basketball Officials' (CABO) *Post Play*, and the NCAA and FIBA Rules and Mechanics manuals.

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[79] David Teel, "Playing the whistle game: officiating is Kersey's labor of love" in "Bryan Kersey: Six games in six days" [3 pt. Series], *The Daily Press*, The Daily Press: Hampton (30/03/01).

The Good Official in Print

> Court is in session. And I hold the gavel. I must have supreme confidence. And a strong and steady hand. Above all, I must respect the rules of the game. For I am their ambassador. And they are more powerful than any team. Any coach. Or any player. When I'm doing my job well, I am invisible. But everyone knows I'm here.[81]

The above quote is taken from an advertisement for the Cliff Keen Referee Pant in *Referee* magazine. At first glance it may appear to be referring more to a judge than an official, but the similar images invoked are noteworthy. This brief slogan manages to conjure similar images of masculinity, whiteness, power, even omnipotence that are often associated with a judge[82] or paternal figure. These categories are expanded upon as I analyze other representations of the Good Official discourse. I also return to claim that the Good Official is an official who, as the above slogan denotes, is *invisible*.

Attributes of a Good Official

At this point I introduce and analyze some of the most common adjectives used to describe good officials. I have already explained that there is an emphasis on "the look" of a good official. Much of the emphasis on this look is to visibly assess the level of docility and correct training an individual has embodied. The descriptors that are more interesting at this point have much more to do with comportment and attitude of a good official. From the previous ad slogan we can see several of these emerging.

The first is not merely confidence, but "supreme confidence." "I must have supreme confidence" leaves no doubt that the highest level of confidence or self-

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[80] *Referee: The Magazine of Sports Officiating*, Referee Enterprises Inc.: Racine.
[81] [advertisement] Cliff Keen Athletic, Ann Arbor, Michigan, in *Referee*. *cf.*,.,. Cliff Keen Athletic official website: http://www.cliffkeen.com.
[82] The premise of many Cliff Keen Athletic advertisements draws comparisons to supreme court authority. "I enforce the law … and I have seen every precedent" are some other common themes in addition to the ones in the quoted advertisement.

assuredness is essential for a good referee. Does this stand to reason? When one considers the demands placed on an elite official during a given performance, the need for an extraordinary level of confidence becomes clear. Not only does an official have to work in a high-pressure and fast-paced environment, as was noted earlier, every decision an official makes is under scrutiny. This comes from a variety of sources, not the least of which is the official him or herself. Again, this critical gaze comes from the players, coaches, and fans. Anyone who has ever been involved in a sport of any kind knows the type of reaction that can come in response to a questionable call by a referee. This gaze is only intensified through the use of instant replay on television *and* during live performances.

I recall one game during the 2001-2002 season when University of Alberta player, Stephen Parker, was whistled for a technical foul by the lead referee for hanging on the ring after an exhilarating slam dunk. This call immediately drew a less than favorable reaction from the crowd. This is not surprising since Parker is an exciting and talented player.[83] However, upon repeating the instant replay on the large screen in the gymnasium, the crowds jeering only increased. Events like this happen all the time in basketball. Key players take fouls at important junctures in games. The offended players, coaches, and fans generally react with displeasure to these situations. For officials not to be deterred from making critical calls at important times in the game, this type of reaction cannot phase them. Suffering this type of sometimes abusive and berating criticism from as many as hundreds or even thousands of people at once could easily damage one's confidence.

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[83] Stephen Parker was named tournament MVP of the CIS National Championships in 2002.

Chair of the National Association of Sport Officials (NASO), Gary Welchel, writes a story about an official who he had to convince to remain officiating after an accumulation of situations much like the one outlined above. The story goes that Welchel received a call from one of his officials who was threatening to "hang it all up, so angry was he after that evening's game."[84] When asked why, the official responded with a "list of all-too-familiar complaints."

> The coaches were loud, vocal, complained incessantly about calls they didn't see and debated rules they obviously didn't understand. ... Next he told me about the fans, mostly parents, whose violent anger and vulgarity increased with each whistle against their team. The coaches and fans were enough to put him at his limit, but when he had to factor in school personnel razzing the refs, no real security for the officials following the game and a general lack of respect for the job done, he was at his breaking point.[85]

Considering that this type of abuse occurred in a game in which neither jobs nor money were on the line, but rather at an eighth grade girls' game, one can only imagine the levels of abuse suffered during games where that is the case. Also consider that this was not a young, inexperienced official. In fact, Welchel considers that "[t]wenty years between the lines, thousands of games and probably a million toots of the whistle had made him one of the best officials I had."[86] So why would an official need "supreme confidence"? Because without it even many years of experience might not keep an official in the game. And why is this important? According to Welchel, "we need to remain in the game, because if we leave it, there may not be a game left."[87] Apparently, only a supreme level of confidence will prevent this.

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[84] Welchel, Gary, "Support Necessary in Retaining Officials", *Referee*, Volume 26 Number 11 (November 2001): N2-N3 [insert].
[85] *ibid*
[86] *ibid*
[87] *ibid*

While confidence is an obvious essential for a good official, confidence alone is not a sufficient characteristic of a good official. The confidence in one's self to be able to handle this type of abuse is one thing, but night after night, game after game, dedication is perhaps just as important. The caption on a motivational poster entitled, "A Tribute to Our Dedication" captures the feeling of importance of a dedicated official.

> The rules are just ink on paper. Without us, they are easily bent and broken. We relish the challenge of using them to craft a game fairly played.[88]

Here again, we find more than a simple characteristic of a good official, but also a sense of importance---a legitimacy. In both Welchel's urge to stay confident and remain in the game, and this poster caption, the sense that officials view themselves as essential participants in the sports they officiate emerges. This is a theme I revisit, because right now there is more to say about dedication.

Dedication is an essential aspect of a good official's persona to stay involved in the sport, despite the many distractions and nuisances of the avocation. However, good officials do not simply stay involved. Good officials progress, improve, and advance through their ranks to the highest levels attainable. Dedication involves much more than simply being committed enough to sacrifice a few nights of television per week during the season to work games. Dedication demands that one constantly try to improve and develop as an official. This constant effort, according to Neil Aguiar, is one of the essential traits that will help an official advance through the ranks of officials to the top of their game.

> *Dedication*: Hold every game in high regard. Know the rules. Continue to self evaluate and improve. Officiate during the off season and attend a summer camp

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[88] National Association of Sport Officials (NASO), motivational poster. Referee Enterprises Inc.

> if possible. Develop relationships with officials whom you hold in high regard, and learn from them.[89]

In the same article, Aguiar lists six other traits that help an official advance to the higher levels. As indicated earlier, much like other organizations, officials too need to exhibit certain qualities, meet certain requirements, before they can be promoted to a higher position. Dedication is one of those areas that an official can work on to demonstrate their desire and ability to be promoted. The others listed in this article are: acceptance, attitude, professionalism, and tenacity. Some of these are taken up in more detail later, but the two most important factors that influence an official's advancement are experience and ability.

It has become a taken-for-granted fact that coaches "work" the youngest or least experienced official on a crew. This is undoubtedly based on the assumption that the young, inexperienced official is more easily influenced by the coach and therefore may make a close call in that team's favor. This, however, is not always the case. Some young officials do have the ability to handle this type of situation. There are also officials with many years of experience who never reach the pinnacle of the game. So experience alone is not a sufficient commodity for advancement. Experience paired with ability are the combined attributes of a good official.

"*There is no substitute for experience.*"[90] This is what Aguiar tells us in his article. And ability? It is actually a combination of things as well. Ability is the demonstrated capacity to perform in the disciplined fashion outlined earlier in this chapter. The ability to produce a credible, believable performance is half of the battle.

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[89] Aguiar, Neil W., "Advancing through the ranks", in R.J. Hall (ed.), *Post Play: A publication of the Canadian Association of Basketball Officials*, Volume 33 Issue 28, May (2002), Canadian Association of Basketball Officials (CABO): 6.

By looking and acting the part of a 'good' official, any individual gains considerable credibility by demonstrating proficiency in the mechanics of good officiating. But good mechanics only go so far. The rest of the credibility equation comes from the ability to make the calls the other participants expect a good official to make.

Often referred to as the "balls and strikes", even in the sport of basketball there are essential calls that need to be made. Decisions need to be made on every sequence of plays. A good official needs to know what constitutes legal play and what counts as an infraction. In basketball, a player may legally take two steps while holding or carrying the basketball. If a player takes the third step, experienced observers of such a play would recognize this as a traveling violation. Likewise, contact by a defender against an offensive player in the act of shooting for a goal is illegal contact. These "obvious" infractions need to be called by an official in order to meet the expectations of all participants in the game. When these expectations are met, the referee has proven to be competent in making the right calls. Over time, consistent performances like this lead to credibility with coaches and players that this individual official will make the correct call when required. So when it comes to building credibility, there really "is no substitute for experience."

Credibility is probably one of the hottest "buzz words" in officiating today. It is not that different from Michael Jordan or some other highly respected athlete endorsing a certain product in advertisements. If Michael Jordan drinks Gatorade, people buy it. Likewise, when Dick Bavetta, 63 year-old and 27 year veteran official in the NBA, makes a call---people buy it. Well, they buy it most of the time, as we will see. The paradox of the situation remains the same, however. A young official, without the

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[90] *ibid*

established credibility of a Dick Bavetta, may make the correct call in a close situation. The credibility comes from that official being able to "sell" that call. For someone like Bavetta, who has worked for decades at the highest level of basketball, the sale is much easier based on his reputation and consistency in making similar calls over the years. The call in question is only one of the many required for the young official to make correctly in order to establish a similar reputation.

So what does all of this have to do with masculinity, whiteness, and power? In a word---everything. The discursive formation of the good official is definitely political. There is an identifiable political economy to the engendering and racializing of officiating. The next chapter deals specifically with this issue in relation to women officials. But in order to do that effectively, it is necessary to address the politics of difference in a brief section here.

The Politics of Difference: Problems with the Good Official

> Not only was [Livingston] unsuitable because she is from one of the nations competing in the game, but as of January 2002 she was not *good* enough to be the Referee in women's NCAA hockey games. The next month she is *good* enough to referee the Gold Medal Game in the Olympics.[91]

To most, the history of domination in sport by white, upper-middle class males is unquestionable. The combination of medical and moral discourses have continuously suppressed women's participation in sport from its beginnings right through to the present. Arguments of biological difference between the sexes have given rise to naturalized assumptions about physical and psychological capabilities of men and

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[91] Tom Mathers, http://www.newsandevents.utoronto.ca, accessed on June 18, 2002 [my italics]. This quote is in reference to the controversial selection of Stacey Livingston, referee for the Gold Medal Women's Ice Hockey game at the 2002 Salt Lake City, Winter Olympics.

women. Within these assumptions, it is still generally agreed upon that men outperform women in these categories, especially in relation to sport.

On the topic of race, many similar naturalized assumptions have remained pervasive as well. Contrasting contemporary and historical whiteness and blackness, especially in the sporting context, reveals a history of domination and subordination. Again, the moral discourse that surrounds the participation of blacks has continually positioned whites as the extollers of virtuous, gentlemanly sport and the redeemers of the more savage, unbridled Others participating in less sophisticated and improper ways.

One would be naive to think that the many other axes of difference, such as class, age, and ability, do not also play a role in the politics of being an official. Again, let me use Dick Bavetta as an example here. Perhaps somewhat of an anomaly, Bavetta is held as a signpost of good officiating. Despite his age, 63, thin, white hair, and somewhat frail appearance, within officiating circles Bavetta is recognized as one of the best in the game. Having officiated numerous NBA Championship series, Bavetta has proven himself as one of the top officials in the NBA, and in basketball in general. However, without being so well situated within the conventional norms for basketball officials, even Bavetta would not last long as an elite official at 63 years of age. Dee Kantner was fired by the NBA in 2002 at a barely comparable 42 years of age. And while it may seem paltry in comparison with the exorbitant salaries some of the league superstars make, veteran officials are far from poverty with a base salary up to US$282,000 for a maximum 82 game regular season schedule. In any event, axes of difference inevitably factor into the politics of the good official.

Employment statistics in the NBA, provided by the *Racial and Gender Report Card*[92], is limited specifically to these two axes of difference. While there are several other considerations which further complicate the politics of officiating, my emphasis is also limited to discussions of gender and race, with a considerable emphasis on the former. This brings me back to what I am calling "problems" of the Good Official. I identify the specific issues of gender and racial identity as problems, since they identifiably interrupt the discourse of the Good Official in the majority of the sites of my analysis. This is precisely why I must expand on the form of masculinity that I argue strongly informs the discourse of the Good Official.

Masculinity: Contested Terrain

> If masculinity is not the social and cultural and indeed political expression of maleness, then what is it?[93]
>
> Masculinity isn't always a pleasant thing to behold, and it's always difficult, sometimes unpleasant to write about---it's certainly a difficult thing in just about every respect.[94]

When we examine the discursive formation of the Good Official, we see a combination of disciplinary technologies, advocated attributes, and consensual and conflicting conversations about what constitutes the Good Official. The inherent, or as I prefer, implied masculinity of this discourse is not necessarily immediately visible. It is only upon a careful or skeptical reading of the representations of the Good Official that a certain form of masculinity is revealed. To begin this examination, I return to the quotation that opened this chapter.

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[92] Richard E. Lapchick, *1998 Racial and Gender Report Card*, Center for the Study of Sport in Society, Northeastern University: Boston (1998). Prior to 1998, the Report was strictly a racial survey, gender was added to the survey in 1998. The publication continues to assess racial and gender categories in its most recent (2001) issue.

[93] Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, Duke University Press: Durham (1998): 1.

> The signs for recognizing those most suited to this profession are a lively, alert manner, an erect head, a taut stomach, broad shoulders, long arms, strong fingers, a small belly, thick thighs, slender legs and dry feet, because a man of such a figure could not fail to be agile and strong ...[95]

While I made it clear that this quote was in reference to a seventeenth century soldier, we have also come to realize that it almost equally applies to the bodily comportment for a Good Official. The thing that has not been emphasized up to this point, is that the gendered nature of this reference is also applicable to the Good Official. And while it is applicable, it is also problematic.

Addressing the "problem" of the masculine quality of sport, which I transfer equally to officiating, Varda Burstyn says the following:

> The problem---if the myriad difficulties of modern sport can be connected in one phrase---is that sport also divides people in ways that are often destructive and antisocial. Sport divides people against themselves. It separates children from children, men from women, men from men, and community from community. Sport models and exacerbates social conflict and encourages antisocial and antidemocratic values. And it does this most centrally through its inflection of gender, particular its offering of ideal types and behaviours for men.[96]

Indeed, the ideal types and behaviours offered for men through sport can be and in fact are problematic. This is especially true when one considers, as I do on the next page, the incoherence of the supposedly tenable form of masculinity put forward. As I outlined in my first chapter, the specific type of masculinity referred to here is what Robert Connell identifies as hegemonic masculinity (HM). Having briefly highlighted several of the central tenets of hegemonic masculinity in the previous chapter, this discussion is more fruitful if we were to trace out the visible implications of this HM within the discourse of the Good Official.

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[94] Toby Miller, *Sportsex*, p. 7.
[95] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 135.

Despite the outstanding efforts by many notable feminist and queer theorists, as well as theorists of masculinity, to challenge univalent representations of gender, the masculinity within sport, and thus officiating, still remains pervasive and often uncontested. One reasonable explanation for this is the operation of masculinity as hegemony and its insistence on both the subtle subordination of women and the unsolicited consent of its adherents. It is also important to understand, as Connell indicates, that " 'hegemony' does not mean total cultural dominance, or the obliteration of alternatives."[97] But rather,

> [i]t means ascendancy achieved within a balance of forces, that is, state of play. Other patterns and groups are subordinated rather than eliminated. If we do not recognize this it would be impossible to account for the everyday contestation that actually occurs in social life, let alone for historical changes in definitions of gender patterns on the grand scale.[98]

This is important, according to Miller, because "accounts of sport as an exclusive zone of male privilege are not tenable."[99] This definition of hegemony allows for incongruencies that inevitably surface due to things like: "legendary homophobic" NFL players outraged by female sport reporters "ogling guys in the locker room", male jockeys with substance abuse or eating disorders in attempts to remain under 117 pounds,[100] and the success of women sport officials. This is precisely why the following catalogue of evinced masculinity within the discourse of the Good Official is analyzed "not as a property or essence, but as contingent signs and practices."[101]

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[96] Varda Burstyn, *The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics, and the Culture of Sport*, University of Toronto Press: Toronto (1999): 27.
[97] Robert W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*, Stanford University Press: Stanford (1987): 184.
[98] *ibid*
[99] Miller, *Sportsex*, p. 68.
[100] *ibid.* p. 6 and 68.
[101] *ibid.* p. 7.

When we compare the bodily comportment of the Good Official with that of the seventeenth century soldier, as outlined in the earlier quote, one potential reading is of the official as a model of physical male perfection. As the *FIBA Referee's Manual* suggests:

> Officiating is not an easy task. The players are big and fast, the pace of the game intense. It is difficult to control or even see everything that happens on the court. ... Basketball is a game of passion, of involvement and commitment, requiring officials with a feel for the game. The best officials ... are intelligent people in excellent physical condition.[102]

According to this definition of the game of basketball, from an official's perspective, certain qualities are implied for those expected to adequately manage/officiate such a game. The fact that officiating "is not an easy task" implies that only those with the work ethic to meet the demands of the game should apply. Second, the fact that the "pace of the game [is] intense" and that "the players are big and fast", implies that any official required to manage the sheer size, speed, and intensity of these players must be of sufficient physical construction to do so. Looking for representational ideals of this type of body, it would not be unreasonable to draw comparisons with those of the archetypal firefighter or soldier.

Despite the fact that officials exercise their authority (read power) over the players primarily in other ways than through physicality (i.e., the judicial power of enforcing the rules), the understanding still exists that they may, at times, be required to physically intervene in altercations between big, intense players. Just as firefighters or soldiers often lay in waiting for action, when called to duty, there is an expectation that they will be both physically capable to meet the demands of the task and willing to risk their bodies for the sake of duty. Although officials are rarely called into action this way,

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[102] FIBA (International Basketball Federation), *FIBA Handbook (1998-2002): Rules, Cases, and Mechanics*, FIBA (International Basketball Federation): Munchen, Germany (1998): 80-81.

the implication remains, most likely as a way of deterring participation by those who could or would not meet this expectation. Yet even without having to physically engage a player, there are still requirements for officials to meet other physical demands.

Returning to the *FIBA Referee's Manual*, the topic of physical preparation is addressed.

> After changing into their uniforms, each official prepares differently for a game. Nevertheless they should be reminded that the modern game of basketball requires a first class athletic performance, not just from the players, but also from the officials.[103]

Again, the discourse is calling for more than a satisfactory physical performance. A "first class athletic performance" is demanded. Particularly in the world of sport, idyllic bodies are perhaps more visible than in other social arenas. When we talk about elite sport, the presumption is that the participants are indeed the "best of the best", the biggest, strongest, and fastest bodies in their sport. The expectation is that this will hold true for officials as well. Relatively few subjects can ever actually meet the ideal standards put forward by this form of masculinity. However, that is not a barrier to subscribers of conventional masculinity.

The Fact(s) of Whiteness

"The law is white"[104]

The Good Official discourse is characterized, or composed, of much more than physicality alone. But before these other components are addressed, I would like to point out that it is not only masculinity written on the bodies of the Good Official, but also that

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[103] *ibid*

[104] Robert Reid-Pharr citing Richard Wright (1947) in *Black Gay Man*, New York University Press: New York (2001): 6.

of whiteness. In his book, *White*[105], Richard Dyer provides a personal account of an experience at a racially mixed dance club. Mimicking a popular arrangement from *Soul Train* in which two lines form facing each other and patrons each take a turn dancing between the lines, Dyer recollects his experience in the middle.

> For all my love of dancing and funk, I have never felt more white than when I danced down between those lines. I know it was stereotypes in my head; I know plenty of black people who can't dance; I know perceptions of looseness and tightness are dubious. All I can say is that at that moment, the black guys looked loose and I felt tight. The notion of whiteness having to do with tightness, with self-control, self-consciousness, mind over body.[106]

I think this is an extremely fitting example of the prevalent notions of normative whiteness and blackness. It also carries from the experience of dance to the arena of sport quite easily. In sport, especially the NBA, we find similar parallels. A later section contrasts what I call hypermasculinity of the players with the more conventional masculinity of the officials, but here I want to draw attention to the differences between whiteness and blackness within athleticism and sport discourses.

In "The Fact(s) of Michael Jordan's Blackness: Excavating a Floating Racial Signifier,"[107] David Andrews describes the deployment of race through contingent signs and practices. Simply put, the mass appeal of Michael Jordan, as well as other players like Grant Hill, is their ability to make "a black man's game more palatable to the white folk" by acting "white" and playing "black".[108] Extraordinary athleticism, improvisational moves, dynamic playmaking, all signify blackness in the NBA. In fact, even white players can "play black." Memphis Grizzlies' guard, Jason Williams, is one

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[105] Richard Dyer, *White*, Routledge: New York (1997).
[106] *ibid.* p. 6.
[107] David L. Andrews, "The Fact(s) of Michael Jordan's Blackness: Excavating a Floating Racial Signifier", *Sociology of Sport Journal*, Volume 13, Human Kinetics Publishers: Champaign (1996): 125-158.

of these players who is recognized for his ability to "play black" due to his "raw" athleticism and improvisational playmaking ability. Williams is so good at playing black, in fact, that his nickname around the league is "White Chocolate". Clearly, the physical nature of the game of basketball is highly equated with blackness. Officiating, on the other hand, is not.

The aesthetic qualities of sport are really quite something to behold, especially those of the NBA. Personally, I marvel at the fluidity, athleticism, and grace of the players in the NBA. I also hold the same admiration for the officials in the NBA. Like watching Tiger Woods swing a golf club, Sammy Sosa or Barry Bonds swing a bat, or Michael Jordan hit a fade-away jump shot, watching an NBA referee call and report a foul is pretty smooth. However, in contrast with the physicality of the players, the referees are far more conservative in their movements---dare I say "tight"?

As outlined early in this chapter, there are specified mechanics for officials. Referees should always maintain an upright posture. They should always be on the move, but movement should be deliberate from point to point. Signals should be sharp and concise. As the *Referee's Manual* indicates:

> Stopping the clock signals are the most important and must be very, very clear. All officials must stop the clock with a straight arm in the air, with a clenched fist for a foul, or an open palm with fingers together for a violation.
>
> The quality of your signals will enhance your image as an official. It will tell the people that you know your job and you are doing it well.[109]

When you consider Dyer's view on the construction of a distinct white identity through the embodiment of discipline, hardness, tautness, and uprightness, contrasted with the "slack" bodies of non-whites, then we can see how the actions of officials can be read as

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[108] *ibid.* p. 151.

white.[110] It may not be surprising then that all of the visual representations of officials in the *FIBA Referee's Manual* are of homogeneous white men, of slim yet muscular builds, erect posture, with similar side-parted coiffures, wearing either official uniform or business attire---icons of the whiteness. It may also be conceivable too that the redemption of values in the NBA is credited to the presence of this whiteness. Whether it comes in the form of Michael Jordan or of the Good Official, this whiteness may incite

> ... the day when the value police will finally break down the laws of the locker room and make all those muscled miscreants toe the line in the name of God and country.[111]

Psycho-Social Attributes of the Good Official

However, returning to the topic of masculinity I want to examine some of the psycho-social attributes of the Good Official. Again, my intention is not to relentlessly catalogue the attributes of the Good Official, but rather to sufficiently highlight those that evoke images of masculinity. In this case, I focus on the implied masculinity of decisiveness, dedication, and credibility.

I have heard it said that it is a "woman's prerogative" to change her mind. This, unfortunately is not the luxury of an official.

> Basketball is competitive. It is a game charged with emotion, where tempers and friction can run high, especially when the score is close. The officials have to keep the game always under control. This means the official must be firm, decisive, and unshakable.[112]

This quote alone conjures images of incredible stoicism, traditionally associated with conventional masculinity, or perhaps more in contrast to traditional femininity. Officials make split-second decisions. Often, those decisions come under intense fire by coaches,

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[109] FIBA, p. 55.
[110] Dyer, p. 21.
[111] Andrews citing Junod (1995): 151.

players, and even fans. As was outlined previously, the abuse directed at officials because of the decisions they make can be outright brutal. Despite the amount of criticism an official takes over a call, it cannot be changed. Knowing the types of criticism and abuse that can ensue controversial calls, an official cannot hesitate to make the right call in any given situation.

I am reminded here of the quote by Tom Hanks in the film *A League of Their Own*, in which he asks one female player, "Why are you crying?" He goes on to insist, "There's no crying in baseball!" This is not to say that only women can cry. What I am trying to indicate is that a Good Official must be stoic, willing to stand behind a decision made, and be willing to make it again. What a Good Official cannot do is break out in tears because a call has been contested or criticized.

The inherent masculinity of dedication is not as apparent. In a report submitted to the British Columbia Basketball Officials Association (BCBOA) and to CABO[113], some of the challenges facing women officials due to the inherently masculine, heteronormative demands for the Good Official. It should be clear at this point that dedication is a highly regarded attribute of any Good Official. However, things that constitute dedication or commitment to officiating are primarily unwritten, social conventions. This includes, but is not limited to things like socializing with other referees at or after basketball games, working a high number of assignments, and demonstrated long-term commitment to officiating from year to year. Unlike professional referees, the majority of Canadian officials have to negotiate between other commitments such as jobs and family and their often secondary role as an official.

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[112] FIBA, p. 80.

Competing demands on individuals' time affect both men and women officials. However, as the aforementioned report suggests, women often face additional challenges that men do not.

The following quotes are taken from anonymous feedback provided to the authors of the report following an officials camp for women. I have selected those quotes which directly or indirectly pose problems for women's abilities to dedicate themselves to officiating.

- There are some pre-conceived perceptions by co-official, players, coaches, and fans that women should not or cannot referee.
- Family commitments: generally, women still run the household, not staying to watch is perceived as a lack of interest.
- Dressing rooms: there are rarely proper facilities or they are shared with the men's rooms.
- There are very few females to share some of the vulnerable moments with.
- Age seems to be an issue as women tend to start early then break to have children and then re-enter their career in officiating.[114]

Hull and Adams direct our attention to some of the more common reasons why it is often more difficult for women to climb the proverbial ladder of success among the ranks of officials. The facts are that many "[w]omen take extended breaks during pregnancy and mothering"[115], and that:

> Part of the implicit criteria for success as the Provincial and National levels includes the expectation [officials] spend time in the gyms (i.e., debriefing after games, observing other officials and participating in post-game socializing). This kind of time is an extravagant expectation for mothers who cannot afford the time.[116]

Considering these conventional gender category roles it seems that basketball officiating, in its contemporary discursive form, remains best suited for the "guys". The fact "[t]hat

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[113] Jan Hull and Devona Adams, *Summary Report for the 2002 Women's Basketball Officiating Clinic – May 10-11, 2002, Victoria, BC*, Canadian Association of Basketball Officials [*np., nd.*] (August 2002): 7.
[114] *ibid.* p. 7.
[115] *ibid.* p. 10.

so many women succeed does not discount the enormous contradictions they experience."[117] This is revisited in the following chapter.

Credibility is the final attribute of the Good Official to investigate in relation to the implicit masculinity of the discourse. This is perhaps best accomplished by a brief departure from the basketball official. The 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City provide us with an excellent example of how credibility as an official is strongly correlated with men/masculinity in elite caliber sports.

Stacey Livingston was appointed as referee for the Gold Medal match between Canada and the United States in women's ice hockey. Immediate controversy ensued due to the fact that Livingston was an American. Many observers felt that the referee for such an important game should not be from either of the countries involved. However, due to the lack of international women hockey referees, Livingston was chosen as the best from among her peers at the Olympic tournament. Despite her nationality, it was her performance during the game that brought Livingston's credibility as an official into question even further.[118]

Canada won the contest 3-2, despite the fact that Livingston assessed 26 minutes in penalties to the Canadian team compared to only 12 minutes to the Americans. While it is not uncommon for one team to incur more penalties than another in contact sports, what is unheard of is the eight consecutive power plays the United States' team received, especially considering that Team Canada was the fair play leader in the tournament averaging just over 10 minutes in penalties per game until the final. But the criticism of

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[116] *ibid*

[117] Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, University of Toronto Press: Toronto (1996): 144.

Livingston's performance was not restricted to the one-sidedness of her calls, it was also noted to be poor and inconsistent overall.

> Livingston gave the United States eight consecutive power plays, but she also missed at least one instance when Canada had too many players on the ice. Jayna Hefford may have also been offside before she made it 3-1 with one second left in the second period.[119]

As a result of this poor display of officiating by the American woman referee, considerable debate over her selection as referee for the match ensued in the popular press and in "water cooler" conversations around the country. Many hockey analysts went on the record to say that Livingston's selection was a poor one. For a competition of such caliber, the only suitable candidates for the assignment should have been a male referee from the National Hockey League, because of their proven performance (i.e., credibility) in high-pressure contests. This is not to say that men are assigned credibility automatically. As one of the earlier sections indicated, credibility is something that gets established via continuous, consistent performances---as a by-product of both experience and ability. Dick Bavetta, perhaps one of the most credible officials in the NBA, has also been criticized following a poor performance like the one Livingston apparently had at the Olympics. However, in the case of women referees, because they is a shortage of top-level officials to serve as role models for high-performance officials, and because of the perceived inadequacies of women officiating high-performance sport (male or female), the initial task of establishing credibility is that much more difficult for women officials.

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[118] I argue that the majority of criticism is targeted at Livingston's performance, however, her gender cannot be dismissed. Several hockey analysts did explicitly state that it should have been a male official in the game, regardless of any of the potential women officials' credentials.

[119] [internet] http://www.canoe.ca/2002GamesHockeyWomenArchive/0222_usw-ap.html

Through the discursive formation of the Good Official, it is apparent that hegemonic masculinity plays a significant role in establishing and maintaining the homosocial/homogeneous nature of sport officiating.[120] This chapter has demonstrated both the technologies that produce Good Officials and the discourse that privileges particular attributes, most often those associated with masculinity and whiteness, over other marginalized, competing modes of being. Hopefully, it is evident that although masculinity may be hegemonic within the discourse of the Good Official, it is important to reiterate Connell's claim that hegemony does not mean total cultural dominance nor an obliteration of alternatives. The next chapter deals exclusively with this theme.

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[120] *cf.*, Alan Hunt "Regulating Heterosocial Space: Sexual Politics in the Early Twentieth Century", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd.: Oxford (2002). Implied in my argument is the way in which all heterosocial relationships within sporting contexts are regulated via the discourse of the Good Official. This may become more evident through the following and concluding chapters.

Chapter Three:
The Good Official ... Interrupted

> I always wore my hair short because I officiated [volleyball and basketball]. Because if not ... my hair would be in my eyes an you know, of course, you wouldn't want anybody to tell you you were a blind official. ... So I guess that really saves me from that point of view. And basically I really always dressed in athletic clothes and really never felt as though I really dress like a man. I always dressed more or less in athletic clothes. And it probably was masculine, but that wouldn't faze me.[121]

> 'Women's sports run by women' is so utopian an ideal that it cannot be imagined. As a result, girls and women struggle to develop identities of healthy womanhood in a cultural practice largely controlled by males and steeped in a discourse of masculinity. In the absence of the sort of vigorous feminist debate about alternatives ... there is little to challenge the naturalization of the male model. That so many women succeed does not discount the enormous contradictions they experience.[122]

With the construction, through discipline, and the formation, through discourse, of the Good Official sufficiently outlined in the previous chapter, I now turn to the paradox of the Good Official---what happens when the Good Official is also a WOMAN? I contend that because the discursive formation of the Good Official is "steeped in a discourse of masculinity"[123], or hegemonic masculinity (HM), the presence of a female body in this endeavor necessarily ruptures, fractures, or *interrupts* the existing, dominant discourse. In this case, the success of women officials interrupts the Good Official discourse. Simultaneously, I argue that the category of 'woman' is also interrupted, as is highlighted in the opening quotation above.

This chapter deals with the negotiation of a variety of subject positions, primarily the competing, often mutually exclusive, identities of woman and official. I feel this is an important investigation to challenge "the dominant masculine values of both sport and the

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[121] Loraine Sumner quoted in Susan Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge (1994): 201.
[122] Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, University of Toronto Press: Toronto (1996): 144.

wider culture."[124] However, I also feel that this is an opportunity to challenge racist as well as sexist ideology through a reading of the only current professional woman official in an all-male, major professional sport league (NBA), Violet Palmer. The "facts" of Violet Palmer's blackness might also prove to be a useful site of investigation for other subordinated subject positions. In any case, the visible markings of difference interrupt or rupture the discourse of the Good Official.

The Good Official ... Interrupted

In the previous chapter, both the technologies (discipline) required to produce Good Officials, and the overarching discourse which informs its practice were outlined and made evident. A condensed summary of that chapter reveals that, due to the specific technologies employed to construct Good Officials, a strong parallel can be drawn to the making of men. The discourse which dominantly informs the practices of the Good Official is also highly contingent upon the norms and conventions of hegemonic masculinity. Essentially, the paragon of the Good Official is the middle-aged, white man. If this is the case, as I have argued, the question then becomes what happens when the official is also a woman? If, as I have said,

> [t]he signs for recognizing those most suited to this profession are a lively, alert manner, an erect head, a taut stomach, broad shoulders, long arms, strong fingers, a small belly, thick thighs, slender legs and dry feet, because a man of such a figure could not fail to be agile and strong ...[125]

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[123] *ibid*

[124] Mary G. McDonald, "The Marketing of the Women's National Basketball Association and the Making of Postfeminism", *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, SAGE Publications: Thousand Oaks, 35/1 (2000): 35-47.

[125] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan, Vintage Books: New York (1977): 135.

then what happens when we add breasts to this equation? What if *she* has "brown hair flowing past her shoulders [and] rings on her fingers"[126]?

Inevitably, the visible markers of sexual difference give rise to the need to identify this individual as "woman". When this happens to also be an official, she becomes a woman official. Ultimately, the "woman" qualifier in front of "official" becomes the important signifier. The potential for her to be a Good Official is interrupted by the corporeal difference from the dominant norm. To draw attention to conventionally female characteristics is to diminish the ability to be a Good Official. This inferiority narrative has a long history for women in sport, and for women in officiating.

> Sexism as a system of male privilege and female subordination is based on the acceptance of particular definitions of gender (what constitutes a man or woman) and gender roles (what qualities, talents, and characteristics women and men are supposed to have). Women's serious participation in sport brings into question the "natural" and mutually exclusive nature of gender and gender roles. If women in sport can be tough minded, competitive, and muscular too, then sport loses its special place in the development of masculinity for men. ... These challenges threaten an acceptance of the traditional gender order in which men are privileged and women are subordinate. Thus, they account for much of the strong resistance to gender equity in sport and the need to marginalize and control the growth of women's athletics.[127]

Women, as a collective, have been participating in sport in increasingly significant ways since the nineteenth century. The challenges noted above have been a consistent, continual reality for women participating as athletes. Women have also been participating as sport officials for just about the same duration. In fact, in 1892 after the first rules of basketball were published, proponents of the game began traveling around the United States and Canada educating people on how to play and teach the game.

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[126] The Sporting News, "Kantner: 'I feel pretty much accepted'", [internet] http://www.sportingnews.com/nba/articles/19990514/157038.html, accessed on 22/03/01.
[127] Pat Griffin, *Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport*, Human Kinetics Publishers: Champaign (1998): 16-17.

Simultaneously, instructors at the YMCAs, schools, and colleges who were learning how to teach the game of basketball were also learning how to officiate. The original basketball referee was the coach or physical education instructor at these different institutions. When that institution happened to be a women's college (i.e., Smith College) then the referee for women's games was also a woman. In 1899, director of physical education at Smith College, Senda Berenson, modified the rules of basketball to make it more suitable for the young women of the time. This initiative to foster a specifically women's game for women was also the drive behind encouraging women to assume the other leadership roles in the sport; that is, as coaches *and* referees.

In her chapter "Order on the Court: the campaign to suppress women's basketball"[128], Susan Cahn outlines the efforts of women's sport reformers to insulate women's basketball from the masculine influences of men's sport.[129] This reform movement saw numbers of women basketball officials in the mid-1900s that have yet to be paralleled today. Despite women officials in the NBA and NCAA, the numbers of women officials, even working exclusively women's basketball, are not what they were during the peak of this reform movement. This is interesting, because even Title IX did not restore the number of women to the ranks of official anywhere close to what it did for participation numbers as athletes. As late as 1997, only 28 percent of the officials working the NCAA Women's championship tournament were women. That number was

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[128] Susan Cahn, *Coming on Strong Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge (1994): 83-109.

[129] For a more Canadian centered account, *cf* Bruce Kidd, "Girl's Sport Run by Girls" in *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, University of Toronto Press: Toronto (1996): 94-145. Also note that while the previously described rise of women's basketball is principally American, the development of basketball in Canada parallels the American very closely.

up from a mere 19 percent in the previous years.[130] This is yet another example of the masculine hegemony within officiating.

> Marcy Weston, the national coordinator of officials for NCAA women's basketball, provides some historical perspective. "There were many more women reffing when I was an active official than there are now," she says. "I've reffed college women's basketball since 1969, and as the game started to get bigger, with more money and more visibility, more guys wanted in."[131]

As the stakes got higher for women's basketball, more and more men officials wanted to use that league as a vehicle for their own professional opportunities. The intense competition of officiating in NCAA men's Division I basketball is also cited as one reason why more women do not pursue that career path, instead of restricting themselves to women's basketball. This further perpetuates the gender stereotypes of what is acceptable or appropriate for women and men, but also reinforces the HM hierarchy of both sport and officiating.

> Attendance figures are used to quantify the difference in pressure between men's and women's basketball just as they are used to justify the disparity in fees. For example up until four or five years ago at Louisiana Tech, there were always more people attending the women's games than the men's. There would be about 8,000 spectators for the women and then everybody would leave and there would be about 3,000 for the men because the women ranked in the top four in the nation and the men were awful. Men use those figures when they work to their benefit and then when they don't, they ignore them.[132]

As a result of all of this, there has been a return to the "women for women's sport" paradigm. Especially in Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) and Canadian Colleges Athletic Association (CCAA) basketball, administrators (i.e., athletic directors) have placed an increasing demand on officials' organizations and league supervisors to assign more women to women's games. Consequently, the 2001 CIS Women's National

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[130] Perry Barber, "In the Fraternity", *Referee: The Magazine of Sports Officiating*, Referee Enterprises Inc.: Racine, Volume 23 Number 3 (March 1998): 32-36.
[131] *ibid*

Championship game was officiated by the first ever, all-female crew. For the 2002 Championships, the CIS designated four women as crew chiefs for the tournament, superceding the traditional regional assignments. Again, that Championship was officiated by an all-woman crew of three. Likewise, both medal games at the 2002 CCAA Women's Championships were officiated solely by women.

The fallout from these "advances" for women basketball officials is just as Susan Faludi indicates follows any liberation or advancement movement---a backlash by affected men.[133] A strong sentiment currently among officials is that there is a real political economy to being a woman.

> If you're a basketball official it pays to be a woman. Don (Butch) Steponchev sounds envious. "In today's world, it's really advantageous to be a woman in the officials' circle," says Steponchev, [then] national education officer for the Canadian Association of Basketball Officials and a basketball official for about 35 years.[134]

Speaking about one of Canada's international caliber referees, Janice Deakin, Steponchev further notes that

> She's gone to women's national finals that most of us would have pulled our hair out to get to, but she's got there because she's good and because she's a female. She referees nothing but women's competition. She's proved herself very valuable and does an outstanding job.[135]

It should not require too much reading between the lines to see the rupture an official like Deakin's introduces to the discourse of the Good Official. Being 'good' is never enough on its own for a woman official. In countless representations, sexual difference (i.e.,

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[132] *ibid*
[133] Susan Faludi, Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women, DoubleDay: New York (1991).
[134] Darren Zary, "Order in the court: It's a land of opportunity for female basketball officials", *The Star Phoenix* (14/01/97): B1.
[135] *ibid*

implied inferiority of women) is necessarily foregrounded, even when it happens to be a representation of a noted good official, albeit a woman.

The same things that Steponchev implies about Janice Deakin, have equally occurred to other prominent women officials; from other elite Canadian basketball officials like Karen Lasuik and Nancy Ethier, and renowned Canadian soccer official Sonia Denoncourt, through the four women umpires who have worked non-major professional baseball[136], to Dee Kantner and Violet Palmer in the NBA. The response, by mostly men, is to differentiate between the Good Official, which is considered the "real" official, and women officials, who by default become subordinate. This is also very similar to what happens to other women in conventionally male-dominated sporting positions, such as women who coach all-male teams.

> The women who tread upon the patriarchal turf of coaching all-male teams identified a number of common concerns and experiences. They were met with varying degrees of resistance, and as interviews progressed, the intricate gender issues these women faced began to become more articulated and observable. These issues ranged from sexist wisecracks from male coaches, to problems associated with establishing authority with players and fellow coaches, to outright sex discrimination in the professional realm.[137]

Once again, the masculine hegemony appears to have reasserted itself in maintaining the hierarchical organization of contemporary sport. The typical response to women's participation as elite officials is to minimize their achievements and/or to discriminate outright.

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[136] Here I refer to Bernice Gera (1972), Chris Wren (1975-1978), Pam Postema (1977-1989), and Theresa Cox (1989-1990) who have all worked minor professional baseball, but never reaching the game's pinnacle in the majors.

[137] Ellen J. Staurowsky, "Women Coaching Male Athletes", Michael A. Messner and Donald F. Sabo (eds.), *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives*, Human Kinetics Publishers: Champaign (1990): 165.

The overt interruption of the Good Official discourse is further accented by a quote from Theresa Cox, "the fourth, and so far last, woman to umpire professional baseball."[138] "They [men] think if a woman is capable of doing the same job as they do, then the standard required by the job must have been lowered by our participation."[139]

> "Women have always had to prove themselves twice as good and work twice as hard simply to gain acceptance in the ranks," she says, "and then once we have earned a measure of respect, it is frustrating to learn that the same men who offered their support and encouragement up to that point now decry the fact that we are their colleagues, as if our working side by side with them is a devaluation of the entire profession."[140]

In summary, women have been officiating sports for a long time. A few have even participated at very high (i.e., professional) levels of men's sport. However, despite how much experience and ability these women bring with them, regardless of how well they have been disciplined as Good Officials, the mere fact that they are women has interrupted the dominant discourse. The backlash of such an interruption manifests itself in the subtle envy officials like Don "Butch" Steponchev (the irony of this nickname might become evident momentarily) display, to outright sex discrimination. All of this because the presence of a woman official undermines the conventional, hegemonic masculinity of the pursuit. The Good Official is not tenable in its dominant form if a woman can do the job. However, the Good Official is not the only category that is interrupted by this scenario.

Woman Interrupted

> In sexist social view, the very participation of women tends to downgrade an activity, and sport is much too important and stands for far too many valuable

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[138] Perry Barber, p. 35.
[139] *ibid*
[140] *ibid*

> social norms for that to be permitted. ... Most pernicious of all, the women in sport are so adversely affected that they are no longer considered real women.[141]

The subordination of women's experiences as elite officials, as outlined in the previous section, is only one way in which women's participation as officials gets taken up by those within the referees' circle, and by the media and the sporting community at large. The next chapter (Four) takes up the meaningful representations of officials in a more general way. Here, however, I consider representations of women officials specifically. First of all, as the following analysis suggests, in order for women to continue to pass as a Good Official, a certain degree of masculinization takes place. In effect, women must become "one of the guys" in order to attain and maintain their positions as elite officials, especially within male sports. A second reading of representations of women officials reveals attempts to dismiss or ignore gender altogether. This tactic, while seemingly from a well-intended liberal ethic, is also highly problematic. This dismissal or refusal of gender does not account for the fact that when gender is invisible, the default is to read masculine. The third and final reading of this section injects sexuality into the equation. With two masculinization projects complete, it is inevitable that homophobia be addressed at some point of this conversation. This section deals with what happens when this symbolic transformation of woman to "guy" takes place.

Becoming "One of the Guys"

> America's problems with race and gender were upended by two women with the guts to referee in the National Basketball Association.[142]

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[141] Gerber, Ellen et al in *The American Woman in Sports* cited in Hicks, Betty, "Lesbian Athletes", Rogers, Susan Fox (ed.), *Sportsdykes: Stories from on and off the field*, St. Martin's Press: New York (1994): 57-74.

[142] E.J. Dionne Jr., "Not for men only", *Commonweal*, Volume 124 Issue 20 (21/11/97): 7.

In this section I provide an example of what an analysis can potentially reveal by reading representations of women officials through the discourse of hegemonic masculinity. In this analysis, I read across two different popular texts that generate similar representations of women officials. In my analysis, I hope to reveal more than the myth behind the representations, and to speak about the *power/knowledge* nexus that is enacted through the subsequent discourses.

Working from the preceding quotation, the first indication that the two women hired to officiate in the NBA in 1997 have undergone some degree of masculinization is that they were required to have the "guts" to enter into this profession. Basketball is a contact sport. Anyone who has ever watched an NBA, or other elite basketball, game live and close-up can attest to the intense physicality of the game.[143] The game is not as physical for officials, however. During the game, officials are strategically out of harm's way, and in position to view the players for infractions of the rules. Before and after the game, the officials are escorted by police and have a guarded dressing room to ensure no harm comes to them from any potential wrong-doers. "We're protected like the President," says NBA veteran official Derek Robinson in an extremely rare newspaper interview.[144] The lanyard that keeps the whistle around an official's neck has been equipped with a break-away clasp to prevent any possibility of the referee being choked by a player or crazed fan as he or she exits the playing area. Other than the courage required to go to work with more than 15,000 pairs of eyes on you at any time, I can

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[143] *cf Sports Illustrated* coverage of the 2001 NBA Playoffs in which Dikembe Mutombo received numerous elbows and shoulders to the face while guarding Shaquille O'Neal. *cf* Chapter Four in which discussions of the problems the extreme physicality of O'Neal creates for the officials.
[144] Brad Townsend, "Referee Confidential", *Dallas Morning News* (18/03/01).

think of no significant reasons for an official to require "guts" to do their job – other than the attempt to invoke images of daring, risk-takers in the traditionally masculine sense.

If this is the case, explicit or not, it has taken less than three lines of text to invoke the beginnings of a masculine image for women officials. But the attempt at transformation does not end there. Not only are these women "gutsy", but they are "tough" too.

> These are tough women. They can take this – and more. "Confrontation is part of being a referee," said [Violet] Palmer. "If players cross the line, they will receive a technical foul." Getting tossed from a game should convince the rude and recalcitrant that women refs have the same authority as men.[145]

Toughness is one of the most commonly associated traits of contemporary manliness, or hegemonic masculinity. Perhaps one of the most devastating phenomena in society today is men trying to prove their masculinity by becoming "tough guys". Read any newspaper, watch the evening news, or take in any Hollywood blockbuster – violence and toughness go hand in hand. Young men in North America repeatedly attempt to conform to cultural norms for masculinity by acting tough and perpetuating violent behavior.[146] And, apparently so do Dee Kantner and Violet Palmer as officials in the NBA. According to the quotation, they must be tough in order to prove that they have the same authority as men.

In the few years following their emergence as officials in the NBA, Dikembe Mutombo explained to Chris Ballard of *Sports Illustrated* that Kantner and Palmer have improved in their abilities to assert conventionally masculine traits on the court. "It's not like in the beginning, when they would take everything thrown at them … now, when

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[145] E.J. Dionne Jr. p. 7.
[146] *cf* "Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and the Crisis of Masculinity," Sut Jhally (dir.), Media Education Foundation (1999). Videocassette.

you say something, they look you in the face and make sure you don't take them lightly."[147] In their attempt to become more accepted by the players and their peers, the women have learned to be less submissive – a traditional trait of femininity, and become more assertive, confident, and bold – classical masculine traits all. In fact, the two have been so successful in their transformation that even Violet Palmer says herself that she is now feeling like "one of the guys."[148] So although the biological markers of their sexed bodies demand that they not share a dressing room with their male counterparts, Kantner and Palmer are considered by others, and even themselves, to be two of the guys.

To attain success in the NBA, Kantner and Palmer have had to repeatedly demonstrate masculine qualities. To gain respect from the players they could not act submissive, or shy away from confrontation. They needed to be gutsy and tough in order to enact the same authority as men, despite any inherent power in their positions as officials. To me, this is a masculinization project of the not-so-subtle order. To meet the expectations of the other participants in the NBA, and to adhere to the discourse of the Good Official, these women have been required to conform to the norms of normative masculinity. It is only through exhibitions of this masculinity that they are enable to maneuver within this domain.

As a result, the texts generated detailing these compliances serve to perpetuate these ideals to other women officials. What these texts fail to address is the underlying paradox of how to best represent the tension that exists between the seeming invisibility of gender in these representations, when reading them through the HM discourse, and the foregrounding of sexual difference. The contradiction is extremely evident in the way

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[147] Chris Ballard, "Confident and Comfortable", *Sports Illustrated*, Volume 94 Number 12 (19/03/01): 119.
[148] *ibid*

officials like Karen Lasuik get applauded for the masculine qualities of their performances on the basketball *and* as women.[149] These officials' willingness, even eagerness, to dismiss gender as a constituent of their status while being simultaneously championed as elite women officials is utterly paradoxical. The following analysis should help to make this paradox even more evident.

"I'm an official, not a woman."[150]

> [I]f we exposed the gendered nature of existing legal assumptions and insist that these incorporate women's perspectives, we can move beyond the debate over whether the law should treat women and men the same or recognize gender-specific needs. [This] does not mean that *all* women have the same interests and that these cannot be changed. On the contrary, as the example of parental leave shows, a "dynamic" approach to sexual difference can recognize that although gender-specific responsibilities and needs exist, many of these can in principle become gender neutral. It is also important to remember that gender differences can vary from one social group to another, and that they are likely to be mediated by divisions of class and race.[151]

What I hope the preceding quotation makes evident is that if we are to read basketball officiating as a gender-neutral pursuit, we must either make several rather gross assumptions, or we must reconsider our approach to sexual difference. To simply state that sex does not matter is to simply not understand the complexity and contingency of subject positions. In the quote I began the last section with, "Two views about America's [*sic*] problems with race and gender were upended by two women with the guts to referee in the National Basketball Association,"[152] the two views are at extreme opposite ends of the political spectrum. The one view holds that we have become politically correct to a fault. This group believes that we should "declare the problem of

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[149] See Chapter One, p. 1.
[150] Thomas O'Toole, "Davis was ready for NCAA's call", *USA Today* (20/03/02): Sports 02.
[151] Valerie Bryson, *Feminist Debates: Issues of Theory and Political Practice*, New York University Press: New York (1999): 78.
[152] E.J. Dionne Jr., "Not for men only", *Commonweal*, Volume 124 Issue 20 (21/11/97): 7.

discrimination solved, to toss out affirmative action and to cease talking about race, gender, and 'past injustices'."[153] The other views our society as hopelessly racist and sexist and that "only the most rigorous forms of affirmative action will keep prejudice at bay."[154]

> A third view might be called "liberal" ... It shares the first camp's belief that [we have] made great progress in beating back prejudice. It holds that no one should be reduced to his or her race, ethnicity, or gender. But with the second camp, it believes that this progress cannot be taken for granted, that some pressure is still needed to fight discrimination, that individuals advance by a combination of individual effort and collective assertion. That's where the NBA's new women refs come in.[155]

Michael Jordan is clearly in the first camp with his comment, "If they can referee, they can referee no matter what sex they are."[156] The second camp would clearly be opposed to Charles Barkley's assertion that, "I don't think women should be in the Army, and I don't think they should be NBA refs."[157] Determining that much is not a problem. What is difficult, is to determine if anyone can honestly fall within the third camp. The author's insistence that this is where Kantner and Palmer come into the equation is not backed even by her own evidence, and it definitely is not evident in the responses from the women officials themselves.

> "I don't think that Violet or I would ever say our intention is to be trailblazers," said Kantner. "If one of the after effects is that women are given opportunities ... obviously we're in favor of that. Our focus now is to referee in the National Basketball Association to the best of our ability."[158]

Oddly enough, one of the women who did receive an opportunity in light of the women NBA refs' advances, albeit almost five full years after the fact, echoes a similar

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[153] *ibid*
[154] *ibid*
[155] *ibid*
[156] *ibid*
[157] *ibid*

sentiment. Melanie Davis, the first woman to referee the NCAA Men's Championship Tournament in 2002, does not view herself as a trailblazer either. Nor does she feel any responsibility to ensure that her success is not an anomaly. "I hope this opens the door for other ladies to come in," Davis said afterward. "If not, I'm going to take this moment and cherish it."[159] She also reiterates the type of postfeminist comment one would expect from the first camp. "The coaches treated me like another official," she said. "If I make a mistake, I want it to be known it was because I'm an official and not a woman."[160]

With all three of the most groundbreaking women in basketball officiating history taking up the rhetoric of the first camp, flat out refusing to see the need for any type of affirmative action, I am confused as to how one could consider that these women are in anything but the postfeminist camp. While these are some issues I take up later, we have not even yet begun to address issues of class, race, or sexuality subordination. I guess if at least three women can attain the highest levels of men's sport as officials, the problem must be solved, right? Without even as much as hinting at other complications, the evident gender bias alone should lead even the most apathetic individuals to see that something is not quite right with this picture.

Melanie Davis is not the only one denying conventional womanhood in favor of being an official. In the opening chapter I outlined the story of Karen Lasuik, which led me to this research project. Kantner and Palmer too choose 'official' over the other possible categories. This thinking completely ignores both the trials of other women who have tried to crack the glass ceiling in men's professional sport *and*, as Kidd notes, fails to challenge the naturalization of the male model, and discounts the enormous

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[158] *ibid*
[159] Associated Press, "Female Ref in NCAA Tournament Sets Milestone" (15/03/02).

contradictions women in sport continue to face.[161] No matter how much public refusal of gender takes place, no matter to what extent women officials adopt masculine qualities, they are still marked as "women" officials, and they still get their own locker rooms. Erasing gender simply does not work in accounting for the subjectivity of a woman in a male-dominated enterprise with the accompanying masculine-laden discourse.

> Female judges do not automatically take the side of women in the courts, and the kind of women who succeed in the legal profession are perhaps less likely than average to display stereotypically female qualities such as care and compassion. Nevertheless, the under-representation of women in the judiciary seems likely to confirm the marginalization of women's experiences.[162]

Fear and Loathing: The Possibility of an All-Dyke Final

> Everyday discursive practices invariably construct "women who become like men" as deviants. The emphasis in sports on intimidation, violence, and physical prowess, as well as on sports' misogynistic, homophobic, and male homosocial valences, mean that sportswomen who challenge gender norms usually face formidable resistance. Nevertheless, as noted earlier, traditional athletic ideologies of masculine superiority have been destabilized as women have gained greater access to sport. Yet their presence also poses threats to masculinity, precipitating male "hysteria" and attempts by men to contain women's aspirations and resistance.[163]

There is a social aspect to being a referee. As I have pointed out at various other points in this work, aspiring officials are encouraged to socialize with more senior, higher ranked officials. Through this association it is believed that the up-and-coming official will learn something, and gain valuable insights from the more experienced referees. As someone who has been part of this social and quasi-professional network, I can attest to the fact that this is true. Indeed, one can gain valuable insight into the game of basketball

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[160] Thomas O'Toole, "Davis was ready for NCAA's call", *USA Today* (20/03/02): Sports 02.
[161] Bruce Kidd, p. 144.
[162] Valerie Bryson, p. 81.
[163] Toby Miller, *Sportsex*, Temple University Press: Philadelphia (2001): 108.

and how best to officiate in certain situations. But not all of the insights shared are as useful or beneficial as others.

A regular site for these types of interactions between officials takes place in an upper corner of the seating area during University of Alberta Pandas' and Bears' games. For non-CIS officials, this is an opportunity to watch a game, or parts of a game, with one or all of the members of the officiating crews for that evening. The conference supervisor of officials, or designated evaluator, is generally also present at these games. Many other officials also tend to congregate on these nights if they are not assigned elsewhere. It can be a great site for camaraderie and education. It was on one of these nights that one conversation in particular continues to stand out in my mind.

There was a small group of senior level officials sitting in the stands discussing the 2001 CIS Women's National Championship Tournament. The host University of Alberta Pandas had qualified for the Final against the University of Regina Cougars. This was to be the first CIS championship to be officiated by an all-woman crew, and all of us in the stands knew about the assignments in advance. Consensus among many officials was that there was an agenda to have the three women in the final game prior to the tournament start, despite the performances of any of the male officials in the tournament. This did not sit well with many of the male officials in attendance. However, the particular part of the conversation that I still find the most striking was the comment made by one of the CIS officials in attendance. "It's sure a good thing the Pandas made the Final … otherwise it'd be an all-dyke final."

My project is not to sit here and speak to the sexuality of the participants involved in that game. However, comments like this are sounded off *ad nauseam* within the

secure, homosocial environment of the "old boys" of basketball officiating. More striking than simple curiosity or questions of sometimes ambiguous sexuality are the matter-of-fact "accusations" of homosexuality among women officials, and apparently coaches and players too. The "all-dyke final" comment was insinuating that, without the presence of University of Alberta coach, Trix Baker, at minimum, both head coaches and all three officials involved in the game would have been lesbians. The audacity of such a statement either reveals complete ignorance, or some form of extra-sensory perception unavailable to the rest of the world. Because of her marriage to a well-known member of the local basketball community in his own right, Doug Baker, heterosexuality is inferred upon Trix Baker almost as if a blessing. I cannot speak to the affirmed sexuality of the opposing coach, Christine Stapleton, nor for the three women officiating the game, one of which was Janice Deakin referred to earlier. However, what I can speak to is the generalized assumptions that come into play with this type of "accusation". "Sport is reserved for men, and the women who seek to enter the arena court the lesbian label."[164]

This type of comment is exemplary of the homophobic, sexist paranoia that exists within the sanctity of the male locker room. In all of my research on Violet Palmer and Dee Kantner, I found no explicit references to their sexuality, other than a *People* magazine article that refers to Kantner's late husband, Neil – a steelworker who died in 1978.[165] And one other quote from Kantner:

> "You don't need to flirt with the guys to get an assignment," Kantner said. "Nothing will drive us crazier. Those of us who have worked our butts off and

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[164] Betty Hicks, "Lesbian Athletes", Susan Fox Rogers (ed.), *Sportsdykes: Stories from on and off the field*, St. Martin's Press: New York (1994): 66.
[165] Alex Tresniowski and Cynthia Wang, "Whistle Blowers", *People*, Volume 48 Issue 20 (17/11/97): 235.

> sweated and done all the right things, you're setting us back. We don't want women to be recognized for that."[166]

This relative lack of "staging" heterosexuality on behalf of these two women in particular flies in the face of what traditionally happens in the media with high profile women athletes.[167] Traditionally, there are overt attempts to foreground the heterosexuality of high profile female athletes, even if that is not the case. This is most commonly due to the ramifications of losing scholarships, sponsorship, or endorsement deals for openly homosexual athletes. Since this is probably not an issue for NBA referees, an explicit heterosexuality campaign is probably either not worthwhile or not necessary. Either way, what is taking place is another refusal on the part of at least one of these officials. In the earlier analysis, Kantner and Palmer refused conventional femininity in favor of the more masculine traits associated with Good Officials. In the second analysis we have the two refusing any gender category associations whatsoever. And finally, here we have a refusal or denial of any coherent sexual identity, or any sexuality at all.

Regardless of the sexual identities of any of these participants, what emerges from this analysis is consistent with Toby Miller's assertion that

> the implication that "women who play sports or those who play at a particular school are lesbians" ... is buying into the conventional liberal logic that says lesbians are acceptable but non-normative. [This] position is tolerant, yes, but it also accepts that lesbianism is far from a universal virtue—it remains something to be "accused of".[168]

What I have hoped to make evident through this final reading in particular is that identity is not necessarily fixed and static. It is complex and multivalent. For women officials, it

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[166] The Sporting News, "Kantner: 'I feel pretty much accepted'", [internet] http://www.sportingnews.com/nba/articles/19990514/157038.html, accessed on 22/03/01.
[167] *cf.*, Toby Miller, "Courting Lesbianism", *Sportsex*, Temple University Press: Philadelphia (2001): 103-126.
[168] Toby Miller, *Sportsex*, Temple University Press: Philadelphia (2001): 115.

is necessary to refuse so many different aspects of their identities, and still they remain subordinated to the dominant male model. Even if the "accusations" are baseless, if a woman is labeled as a lesbian because she wears her hair short or is unmarried, if she is capable of successfully becoming one of the guys, because these are not naturalized or normalized to the extent which masculinity and heteronormativity are within the Good Official discourse, they will remain marginalized and subordinate to the paragons of HM.

To this point I have centered my analyses on both Dee Kantner and Violet Palmer, among others. However, at the conclusion of the 2001-2002 season, Kantner was fired by the NBA. This leaves Violet Palmer as the sole woman to be officiating an all-male professional sports league at its highest level. Many of the previous readings inextricably link Palmer with Kantner. But, the fact that Kantner is out and Palmer is still in is an interesting point on its own. The fact that Palmer is black might also prove to be the most striking interruption yet of the Good Official.

"Bad Black Mama"[169], Revolutionary Black Woman[170], or Just Plain Violet?

> Sadly, in much of the fiction by contemporary black women writers, the struggle by black female characters for subjectivity, though forged in radical resistance to the *status quo* (opposition to racist oppression, less frequently to class and gender) usually takes the form of black women breaking free from boundaries imposed by others, only to practice their newfound "freedom" by setting limits and boundaries for themselves. Hence though black women may make themselves "subject" they do not become radical subjects. Often they simply conform to existing norms, even ones they once resisted.[171]

> I have a great life. I love what I do. I can't believe they actually pay me to do it. It's like a dream come true. I feel truly blessed. Sometimes I look back and I just

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[169] *cf* Robert F. Reid-Pharr, "At home in America" in *Black Gay Man*, New York University Press: New York (2001): 66-82.
[170] *cf* bell hooks, "Revolutionary Black Women" in *Black Looks: race and representation*, Between the Lines: Toronto (1992): 41-61.
[171] *ibid*

> can't believe it. I am 34. I am a black woman. I referee in the NBA. People say, "You're that woman!"[172]

There is a gripping scene in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in which the slave woman, Eliza, narrowly escapes her pursuers by making a daring cross of a frozen river. "Nerved with the strength such as God only gives the desperate"[173], Eliza carries her young son, risking life and limb, to safety—a testament to the desperate conditions for black women during slavery. In no way am I comparing Violet Palmer's performance on the basketball court to the death-defying escape of a (fictional) nineteenth century slave woman. However, a narrative of slavery and the history of black women as laborers, and as revolutionaries, may be helpful in providing at least one potential reading of Palmer's success as a Good Official in the NBA. It might also highlight some of the additional tensions of being a *black* woman official that my other main example, Kantner may not.

In the previous chapter I outlined the hegemonic masculinity that heavily informs the discourse of the Good Official. I also demonstrated the associated whiteness that also informs the discourse. To this point I have shown how the category of woman interrupts the Good Official, simply based on naturalized assumptions of gender difference. I contend that the same thing happens with race. The presence of a black body is sufficient to interrupt the whiteness coded into the discourse of the Good Official.

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[172] Violet Palmer in Alan Eisenstock, "Ultra Violet", *Referee: The Magazine of Sports Officiating*, Referee Enterprises Inc.: Racine, Volume 25 Number 1 (January 2000): 32-35.
[173] Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Bantam Books: New York (1851/1981): 58.

This is very similar to the photography of Robert Mapplethorpe.[174] As Kobena Mercer suggests,

> this deconstructive aspect of Mapplethorpe's black male nudes radically loosens up and unfixes the commonsense sensibilities of the spectator, who thereby experiences the characteristic shock effect as the affective displacement of the fixed boundaries that necessarily anchor ego in ideology.[175]

I argue this is similar to the presence of Palmer within the discourse of the Good Official in that "it can be seen as the trace of a subversive strategy that interrupts, and introduces rupture into, the stability of the binary oppositions into which difference is coded within the dominant culture."[176] This subversive strategy may not be Palmer's own. In fact, I argue that it is not. However, the fact of Palmer's blackness on its own is a sufficient interruption to the intrinsic whiteness of the dominant discourse; *and* it is also a historical rupture within the Good. Here Palmer stands in for the "mythological figure of 'the Negro,' who was always excluded from the good, the true and the beautiful in Western aesthetics on account of his [*sic*] otherness."[177]

This interruption now noted, I move on to reading the story of Violet Palmer through a narrative of slavery, of revolutionary black women, and of bad black mamas. I also think it is important to highlight the political economy of the NBA as a background for parts of this reading. In a domain where black hypermasculinity may carry more capital than the hegemonic masculinity I suggest[178], the conditions for a black woman referee may be different, dare I say more suitable, than even for white men.

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[174] In particular, I am referring to *Man in Polyester Suit* (1980) and *Hooded Man* (1980) which are two popular nude photographs of black men by Robert Mapplethorpe which are examined by David Marriott in *On Black Men*, Columbia University Press: New York (2000): 23-42.
[175] Kobena Mercer, Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies, Routledge: New York (1994): 200-201.
[176] *ibid.* p. 200.
[177] *ibid*
[178] See Chapter Four.

Reading the Violet Palmer Story

As I have pointed out before, there is not much written about individual officials, especially NBA officials, who have league imposed restrictions on interviews with the media. However, a few articles do manage to find their way into print. Perhaps the most comprehensive written account of Violet Palmer as an NBA official is by Alan Eisenstock in a four-page article for *Referee*.[179] The article covers everything from Palmer's childhood in "Compton, a tough area of Los Angeles"[180] to her position in the NBA three years after she broke into the league. It is an article I find fraught with contradiction, unless it is read through a lens of racism, with a history in slavery that still permeates the American consciousness.

The first thing Eisenstock points out is that there is a certain irony to the fact that Palmer made her debut in the NBA on October 31, 1997 – Halloween – a mythical night for spirits crossing between worlds, "the night for uncommon events."[181] On this night, Palmer crossed into a new world alright. It was a world that had never before witnessed a woman in that role. Despite the fact that Palmer was hired alongside Kantner, Palmer will forever hold the claim to being the first woman in the NBA. The fact she is black is perhaps not as striking due to the fact that over 32 percent of the officials in the NBA (1997) are black, clearly the highest ratio of black officials in any major professional sport,[182] but it is noteworthy nonetheless. On the other hand, this could be extremely compelling if, as Eldridge Cleaver indicates, "[i]t was long axiomatic among blacks that a

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[179] Alan Eisenstock, "Ultra Violet", *Referee: The Magazine of Sports Officiating*, Referee Enterprises Inc.: Racine, Volume 25 Number 1 (January 2000): 32-35.
[180] *ibid.* p. 32
[181] *ibid*
[182] Richard E. Lapchick, *1998 Racial and Gender Report Card*, Center for the Study of Sport in Society, Northeastern University: Boston (1998). It is also important to note that this study counted Palmer and Kantner as "Women", rather than categorizing them according to race as was done with the male officials.

black had to be twice as competent as a white in any field in order to win grudging recognition from the whites."[183]

Despite her tough surroundings as she grew up, Eisenstock alludes to the first indicator that Palmer may not be as "black" as she appears.

> Violet was raised in Compton, a tough area of Los Angeles. However, her upbringing defied her surroundings. "My friends say, 'Violet, you grew up in Compton, but your family was like *Little House on the Prairie*,'" she says.[184]

Palmer credits a lot of her confidence and stability to her strong family background, something that defies the myth of the deteriorated urban black family. I do find it interesting, however, that her friends choose *Little House on the Prairie* instead of *The Cosby Show*. As a child who grew up watching both shows, I do not recall the Huxtables ever knowing economic hardship, and I sure do not recall any black folk taking up with the Ingalls. If this reference is not to invoke images of whiteness, the only other reading I can foster is that it invokes a "pioneering spirit", which is perhaps a subtle way of indicating that Palmer has always been a "trailblazer", despite her, along with Kantner's, best efforts to refuse that label.

> She laughs, loud and strong. Violet Palmer exudes strength: physical strength and strength of character. "My whole career has been a kind of blur." Blur as in warp speed. Violet Palmer is only 34 years old and has already completed her second year in the NBA. That's fast. The Violet Palmer story is all about speed, and it begins with a strong launch.[185]

While the speed and strong launch might be better equated with Jackie Joyner-Kersey or Marion Jones in the long jump than a pioneering trailblazer, the above quote can also resonate with a pioneer narrative. I think that is how people want to view Palmer. I do not think that opponents to racial and gender oppression are satisfied simply

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[183] Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*, Dell Publishing: New York (1968): 103. *cf.*, note 136.
[184] Eisenstock, p. 32.

allowing Palmer to be a professional woman with little to no concern or involvement in the task of overcoming racism and sexism that still exist in our society today.

Take, for example, some of the fallout from the Clarence Thomas—Anita Hill scandal. In the Toni Morrison edited, *Race*-ing *Justice*, En-*Gender*ing *Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality*[186], our attention is pointed to the use of stereotypes of black women by Clarence Thomas, among others, and the media to make Anita Hill the villain and Thomas the victim. While the Clarence Thomas hearings played out in a far more public fashion that Violet Palmer's entrance into the NBA, similar things can be said to be at play.

> Because the protagonists of this American theatrical production were black, race stayed in the forefront nearly all the time. Even so, viewers realized, however fuzzily, that something else was going on. The unusual cast of characters made the viewers' task novel and hard: to weigh the significance of race in an intraracial drama. But the exercise proved too daunting, and stereotype, almost inevitably, became the medium of exchange.[187]

During the hearings, two dominant tropes of black women in America were reinforced – the "welfare queen" and the "black lady".[188] The welfare queen should not require much elaboration. It is a very visible and pervasive stereotype in US and North American culture. "Read the papers, watch television, or simply listen to people talk: among other things, welfare queens are held responsible for the crack trade and crack babies."[189] The black lady, on the other hand, is not as overt. The contributions of this

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[185] *ibid*
[186] Toni Morrison (ed.), *Race*-ing *Justice*, En-*gender*ing *Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality*, Pantheon Books: New York (1992).
[187] Nell Irvin Painter, "Hill, Thomas, and the Use of Racial Stereotype," in Toni Morrison (ed.), *Race*-ing *Justice*, En-*gender*ing *Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality*, Pantheon Books: New York (1992): 200-214.
[188] Wahneema Lubiano, "Black Ladies, Welfare Queens, and State Minstrels: Ideological War by Narrative Means," in Toni Morrison (ed.), *Race*-ing *Justice*, En-*gender*ing *Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality*, Pantheon Books: New York (1992): 323-363.
[189] *ibid*

stereotype to the continued disadvantaged status of African Americans may not be as clearly linked as those of the welfare queen but they are just as sinister. Through her "disproportionate overachievement", the black lady supposedly is responsible for the underachievement of black males. She also "stands for black cultural strangeness" and does not equate with the norms associated with blackness in the US.[190] Because of their relative overachievement for black women, one can draw reasonable comparisons between Anita Hill and Violet Palmer. However, the stereotype that allowed for Hill to be demonized might also be the one that allows Palmer to be successful as an elite referee.

The source of Anita Hill's demonization lays precisely in the fact that she was not recognizable as a welfare queen. The political agenda of the Clarence Thomas hearings required that Hill be vilified or demonized to allow for Thomas to emerge as a national hero. While the vilification of sport officials comes under closer scrutiny in the next chapter, compare and contrast the following quotation with the story of Violet Palmer.

> Hill is a threat either because she's *not* a real lady (not "ladylike")—she's a debater, she holds her own in an argument, and she's ambitious—or because she *is* a real lady—by virtue of her class standing. In either case she is dangerous. In a way, she is even more dangerous than ... the welfare queen ... because the national public "recognizes" [the welfare queen] but does not know as easily and as consciously how to recognize the lady. We're accustomed to thinking of the welfare queen as pathological because we've "learned" the story of the culture of underdevelopment; Hill is demonized because we don't *know* who she is. And her quiet, direct, and tearless (read: unfeminine) delivery worked against her.[191]

Palmer is as "dangerous" as Hill in many of the same respects. However, these same attributes also make her a successful NBA official. What is not understood, reading Palmer alongside Hill, is what this means for these women as cultural subjects. What do

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[190] *ibid*
[191] *ibid*

these stereotypes do to their far more complicated subjectivities than simply just as professional black women?

The following readings of Violet Palmer through different tropes for black women are precisely an investigation into the complexities of subjectivity. They are attempts to come to grips with the negotiations that are necessary between different, often competing, aspects of Palmer's identity in order for her to be a successful referee in the NBA. The tropes invoked in these alternative readings are different than those found explicitly in the Anita Hill example. However, the goal is *not* to reinforce or perpetuate racial or gender stereotypes. The goal is to show the effects of these types of representations on living, breathing human beings; to show how for Palmer, like Hill, these tropes can be read as "interchangeable fictions" that get "mixed and matched to suit any racial palette."[192] Rather than refuse history, in the end I feel that recognizing the legacy of slavery and racism through notable tropes is one way in which Palmer's success as an NBA official can make sense.

Bad Black Mama

On the surface, the NBA has its own set of potential image problems. Despite the current popularity of the game globally, the news headlines are littered with players involved in criminal activity. Even the league's superstars are implicated. There is a certain paranoia about young blacks, some fresh out of high school, entering the NBA and earning multi-million dollar salaries. Even after a revival of the league's image after the drug scandals of the late '70s and early '80s, the league finds itself currently lacking a wholesome-type role model. Enter Violet Palmer.

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[192] Toni Morrison, p. xv.

Although there is one theory out there that insists that the two women were hired in 1997 to draw attention away from the indictment of four NBA officials on tax fraud charges, there is something else at play. This becomes more evident in light of Kantner's recent firing by the league. Violet Palmer symbolically stands in for the bad black mama.

> It always starts with Mama, mine loved me. As a testimony of her love, and her fear for the fate of a man-child all slave mothers hold, she attempted to press, hide, push, capture me in the womb. The conflicts and contradictions that will follow me to the tomb started right there in the womb.[193]

In an unconscious response to the plight of the contemporary urban black family, largely due to the myth of the absent father, and in response to the same tropes emerging in the NBA, Violet Palmer could be seen as a redemptive figure.

> The bad black mother does important work in the maintenance of the black community. She is the figure who takes up the management of the crisis that is the black family. She creates a home in America. She turns us black. Thus, she redirects, misdirects, our noble march back to Africa.[194]

I find this narrative useful because Palmer is precisely *not* the redemptive black mother sent to redeem the poor state of the American black family. She is the "emancipated woman" more commonly associated with white liberal ideology. Moreover, she is not the mother figure returning back to the home in accord with conservative values of separate spheres that some argue will facilitate the redemption of the black family unit. In fact, she is the opposite. She is more akin to the feared "black lady" due to her ambitious, independent rise to success in a male-dominated profession. But is refusal of, or resistance to, the mama trope intentional? Is it "revolutionary"?

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[193] Robert Reid-Pharr citing George Jackson in *Black Gay Man*, p. 66. original italics.
[194] Reid-Pharr, p. 68.

Revolutionary Black Woman

While Palmer is definitely a woman who has transgressed traditional boundaries, I think bell hooks would argue that she is not a revolutionary black woman. Like Toni Morrison's character, Sula, Palmer also transgresses boundaries, roams the world, chooses to remain childless and unmarried, and defies conventional notions of passive female sexuality.[195]

> One time a player disputed a foul Violet called on him. "Violet," he pleaded. "If you change the call, I'll take you on a date." "We can't go on a date," Violet said. "And you still got the foul." The players within earshot all laughed.[196]

However, Palmer is much like the character in that, "Sula, like so many other black female characters in contemporary fiction, has no conscious politics, never links her struggle to be self-defining with the collective plight of black women."[197] And while Palmer may "live fruitfully outside conventional gender roles,"[198] she is unlike the revolutionary black women hooks puts forward. Furthermore, hooks would most likely be disappointed with Palmer's refusal to become engaged in radical movements for social change.[199]

The Legacy of Slavery[200]

> Proportionately, more Black women have always worked outside their homes than have their white sisters. The enormous space that work occupies in Black women's lives today follows a pattern established during the very earliest days of slavery. As slaves, compulsory labor overshadowed every other aspect of women's existence. It would seem, therefore, that the starting point for any exploration of Black women's lives under slavery would be an appraisal of their role as workers.[201]

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[195] See bell hooks, *Black Looks: race and representation*, p. 48-50.
[196] Eisenstock, p. 35.
[197] bell hooks, p. 48.
[198] bell hooks, p. 49
[199] bell hooks, p. 53.
[200] See Angela Davis, "The Legacy of Slavery: Standards for a New Womanhood", *Women, Race, and Class*, Vintage Books: New York (1981): 4-29.
[201] *ibid*, p. 5.

Again, I am not saying that Violet Palmer's presence as an official in the NBA is forced labor. On the contrary, Palmer is extremely fortunate to have such a well-paying profession about which she is passionate and at which she excels. However, the legacy of slavery is not gone. The dominance of white owners and administrators over the largely black population of the players is reminiscent of more sinister times not too long gone. It is for this reason that I feel it useful to read Palmer's success, where her white counterpart failed, through the legacy of slavery. I feel that there are several very strongly correlated parallels between the earlier readings of women officials becoming masculine, and/or genderless in order to effectively pass as Good Officials and the trials of black women during slavery.

> Required by the masters' demands to be as "masculine" in the performance of their work as men, Black women must have been profoundly affected by their experiences during slavery. Some, no doubt, were broken and destroyed, yet the majority survived and, in the process, acquired qualities considered taboo by the nineteenth-century ideology of womanhood.[202]

Many trailblazing women officials in baseball were broken and defeated by an oppressive, sexist system that would not allow them to attain the success that they ardently desired and for which they worked extremely hard. Bernice Gera, the first woman to ever work a professional baseball game, "walked off the diamond never to return."[203] This was after only her first game in the pro league. "I wasn't scared off. I was fed up,"[204] she was quoted as saying.

Five years later, the second professional woman umpire, Chris Wren, resigned from her position saying, "As an umpire, I've had to deal with partners who didn't

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[202] *ibid*, p. 11.
[203] Perry Barber, p. 34.
[204] *ibid*

always support me and catchers who intentionally let balls hit me. Someday some poor woman is going to try to follow me and she is going to have a hell of a task."[205] Not only was she discouraged by her lack of advancement to the majors, she was almost physically and emotionally broken as well. The third woman umpire in pro baseball, Pam Postema, was released from service and consequently filed a sexual discrimination charge, citing that she firmly believed the only reason she was not chosen for the majors is because she is a woman.

Although Dee Kantner was employed at the top level of her profession, like these others, she did not last. Legal proceedings are rumored to be on the horizon as a result of her dismissal as well. However, the one woman who has managed to get to and stay at the top level of men's professional sport as an official is Violet Palmer. I contend that this is primarily due to the perception of a black woman as effective labor, especially in the contemporary landscape of the NBA. Palmer's ability to conform to the discursive constraints of the Good Official is a direct parallel with the conditions of black women during slavery. In order to avoid persecution, women were forced to become masculine in the performance of their work, much like the Good Official.

> The slave system defined Black people as chattel. Since women, no less than men, were viewed as profitable labor-units, the might as well have been genderless as far as the slaveholders were concerned.[206]

Not only is it apparent that the legacy of slavery has left an incredible mark on black women's experiences of womanhood, it also appears to have created the conditions of possibility for a black woman to be a Good Official in the National Basketball

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[205] *ibid*
[206] Angela Davis, p. 5.

Association. In order to pass among her colleagues as an official, gender also becomes, in effect, neutral.

This chapter has outlined the rupture, or interruption, to the Good Official discourse that women officials introduce. It has also demonstrated how the category of woman is, in turn, interrupted by the Good Official. Reading representations of women officials through discourses of hegemonic masculinity, homophobia, and racism make it possible to uncover some what is taken-for-granted without such a reading. The following chapter is a continuation of the discussions in Chapter Two. While that chapter investigated the discursive production of the Good Official, the following chapter considers the *power/knowledge* relations between referees and other groups of sport participants. It attempts to uncover the meanings generated through various representations of officials.

Chapter Four:
Superheroes and Villains – Finding Meaning for the Good Official

Mother, may I slug the umpire,
May I slug him right away,
So he cannot be here, Mother
When the clubs begin to play?

Let me clasp his throat, dear Mother
In a dear delightful grip
With one hand, and with the other
Bat him several on the lip.

Let me climb his frame, dear Mother
While the happy people shout
I'll not kill him, dearest Mother,
I will only knock him out.

Let me mop the ground up, Mother
With his person, dearest do,
If the ground can stand it, Mother
I don't see why you can't too.[207]

> [T]he question of agency in cultural practices that contest the canon and its cultural dominance suggests that it really *does* matter who is speaking. Questions of enunciation---who is speaking, who is spoken to, what codes do they share to communicate?---imply a whole range of political issues about who is empowered and who is disempowered in the representation of difference. It is the problematic of enunciation that circumscribes the marginalized positions of subjects historically misrepresented or underrepresented in the dominant culture, for to be marginalized is to have no place from which to speak.[208]

While Chapter Two is not an absolute recital of all of the qualities and characteristics of a Good Official, it does portray some of the most dominant aspects of this specific subject position. Beyond the mere language used to construct the Good Official, beyond mere representation, I am primarily concerned with the

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[207] An 1886 View of the Baseball Umpire, as published in the *Washington Critic* (1886). © Ray B. Brown (1970), in McPherson, Barry D., James E. Curtis and John W. Loy, *The Social Significance of Sport: an introduction to the sociology of sport*, Human Kinetics Books: Champaign (1989): 286.

[208] Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*, Routledge: New York (1994): 194.

power/knowledge relations involved in this discursive formation. This is precisely why this chapter analyzes the meaning of the Good Official for different sport participants.

The central premise to my argument about the meaning of the Good Official is contingent upon which participant group's perspective is taken. Generally, the construct of the Good Official is really only meaningful to referees. For the most part, few of the other sport participants involved in the game of basketball openly care about the actual creation of a Good Official. Ultimately, I think these other participants do know what constitutes a Good Official, but conventional practice involves doing one or both of two things—vilifying officials or dismissing them outright.

The attributes sought after by referees are primarily only meaningful within officiating circles. The attributes of the Good Official outlined in Chapter Two are those attributes that are sought in individual referees by those higher up within officials organizations (i.e., Supervisors). Therefore, individual officials strive to demonstrate these attributes in hopes of being recognized as a Good Official. Since coaches, players, and the media have little, if any, influence over which officials work specific games, it is not as imperative that individual officials are recognized as good by them. However, since a league supervisor does have the influence to assign one official over another to a certain game, it is highly important to the supervisor that individual officials are able to distinguish a Good Official.

At most elite levels of basketball in North America, I am sure that most coaches, administrators, and players expect 'good' officials to be working their games. For these individuals then it is not essential that they ascribe to all of the previously outlined attributes of the Good Official. They judge performance of an official on a case-by-case

basis. Other than the visible discipline exhibited by Good Officials, coaches, players, and others are free to take the discursive constituents of the Good Official for granted. Their primary concern is not about the fervent discrimination of officials to get the best ones on the floor each night. The people in charge of training, educating, and assigning the officials are the ones who need to discriminate. The active participants in each game can generally rest assured that this elimination process has taken place and that Good Officials are assigned to work their game. The level of dedication, experience, ability, and other desirable attributes of each official are of little or no concern to them. They are essentially taken for granted. We can apply Stuart Hall to this example in that:

> the circle of dominant ideas *does* accumulate the symbolic power to map or classify the world for others; its classifications do acquire not only the constraining power of dominance over other modes of thought, but also the inertial authority of habit and instinct. It becomes the horizon of the taken-for-granted: what the world is and how it works, for all practical purposes.[209]

When we return to representations of officials, however, we find that administration, coaches, athletes, and the media all basically do two things when speaking about officials. The first, and most prevalent thing that is done by these participants is to vilify officials. This gets set up in a variety of ways, but the official is rarely represented as a facilitator for the game but rather as another opponent. Not only does one team have to compete against its opponent, they also feel that they are competing against the officials. The second thing that occurs, which can be just as damaging, is the utter dismissal of the officials. Unless there is controversy in a game, comments on the officiating are few and far between. This silence can be a testament to good officiating which I explore in more detail later. However, as some of my examples

that follow show, some competitors believe that the refs have little, if anything, to do with the outcome of a game—the players decide the winner between themselves—the refs simply don't matter.

Returning to the article introduced in Chapter One, "Shaq versus the Refs"[210], we see a classic example of this type of vilifying text. Take the title of the article alone. This easily translates into an antagonistic relationship between the officials and, in this case, Shaquille O'Neal. However, upon further examination of the article it appears that the officials are set up as a third opponent. Not only does a team have to be concerned about competing against the opposing basketball team, it also needs to be concerned with an officiating crew that is perceived to be working against them. The officials, it appears, are represented as foes rather than as the "craftsmen of a fairly played game" as illustrated in a motivational poster caption referred to earlier.[211]

The examination point of this article is the question of how to best officiate Shaquille O'Neal and the intense physical play that seems to correlate with his presence in the low post.

> The question is this: Has the Los Angeles Lakers superstar become unrefereeable? Most NBA observers, even those who speak off the record, fall somewhere in the middle of the debate---does he always foul or always get fouled?---believing that he is an extremely physical player who doles out punishment in proportion to the punishment he receives. They concede that the singular combination of O'Neal's size, strength, nimble-footed quickness and ever developing skills has made it extremely difficult for even the best officials to whistle his game fairly.[212]

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[209] Stuart Hall, "The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism among the Theorists", in Nelson, Cary and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, University of Illinois Press: Urbana (1988): 44-45.
[210] Jack McCallum, "Shaq vs. the Refs", *Sports Illustrated*, Volume 95 Number 17 (29/11/01): 82-88.
[211] See Chapter Two, note 31. National Association of Sport Officials (NASO), motivational poster. Referee Enterprises Inc.
[212] McCallum, p. 84.

So what's the real problem then if the problems for officials are only related to one player, especially if most observers feel that Shaq dishes out as much as he receives? The problem is that, because of the differences in the way the game is called around Shaquille O'Neal, this gets construed as "unfair" to those involved in the game. If he is getting away with illegal or excessive body contact, then it is unfair to those who are guarding him. Likewise, if Shaq's opponents are getting away with excessive force, then it is unfair to Shaq to be suffering such abuse. Either way, who is to blame? The officials are to blame. And more problematic yet for officials is that both sides are pointing fingers.

Despite the fact that most observers feel that the punishment Shaq receives is equitable with what he doles out, the referees still get accused of being unfair. Even O'Neal himself, who "doesn't say much to the referees or talk much about them publicly, [has] rather strong feelings about them."[213]

> "I think they cheat. ... Guys have a knee in my butt and they're leaning on me as hard as they can, and nothing gets called" ... Shaq considers all those no-calls tantamount to "cheating" by the refs. This remains O'Neal's essential complaint about refereeing: ... don't tell me that a defender can't put a knee in my ass, and when somebody does, not call it. Whistle it exactly how the rule is written."[214]

San Antonio Spurs' center, David Robinson, recalls a time when the roles were reversed, however.

> "I remember one time that [Shaq] just rolled me over and kept on going. I said to the refs, 'If you're not going to let me stop him with my hands [the league outlawed hand checking in the post in 1999], how can you let him knock me over?"[215]

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[213] *ibid.* p. 88.
[214] *ibid*
[215] *ibid.* p. 86.

Sacramento coach, Rick Adelman, agrees with Robinson that the excessive contact initiated by O'Neal when trying to establish position in the low post is contact "the referees let go way too much."[216] As a result, defenders feel cheated by what appears to be unfair, inconsistent officiating.

Players and coaches are not the only ones who put out this imagery of unfair, biased, or downright dishonest officiating. Sports writers not only pass on these quotes by the players and coaches but also indulge in some similar diatribes themselves.

> Hardly ever in 12 years of writing commentary have I devoted an entire column to the issue of refereeing. Overwhelmingly, these guys are terrific at a next-to-impossible job. And the three men assigned to call Friday's Game 6 -- Dick Bavetta, Bob Delaney and Ted Bernhardt -- are three of the best in the game. ... Having said that, I have never seen officiating in a game of consequence as bad as that in Game 6. It was bad in Game 5 in Sacramento, when the Kings got the benefit of some very questionable calls, then unforgivably rotten on Friday night in Game 6. ... [The fouls] weren't subjective or borderline or debatable. And these fouls not only resulted in free throws, they helped disqualify Sacramento's two low-post defenders.[217]

This tirade by *Washington Post* writer, Michael Wilbon, is exemplary of the type of commentary that permeates the media involving officials. Despite Wilbon's recognition of the status of the three officials working this NBA Playoff series, he is still able to give the indication that they are intentionally involved in trying to influence the outcome of a game. Allusions to a secret conspiracy with the television networks (in this case NBC) and league officials in place to assure that each playoff series goes to a seventh game to maximize television revenues is a sure way to incite visions of greedy individuals trying to line their pockets through less than honorable means. In this case, conspiracy theories

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[216] *ibid*

[217] Michael Wilbon, "Talk About Foul! Game 6 was a Real Stinker", *The Washington Post* (Sunday, 02/06/02): D01.

only serve to accommodate representations of dishonest officials affecting the outcomes of games.

While Wilbon's ESPN counterpart, Frank Hughes, does not buy into this type of conspiracy theory, he does admit that something erratic is happening with the officiating in this particular series in question.

> Generally, I don't buy that stuff [referring to the network/league conspiracy theory]. Players make plays. If you hit your shots, the refs should not have a huge bearing on the game. But so far in this series, they have had a big impact.[218]

Like Wilbon, and countless others have done, Hughes continues the article by providing numerous examples of apparent mistakes or botched calls by the officials. The fact that no one will concede that the calls are consistently bad/good in favor of one team all the time, night after night might be enough to dissuade readers from buying into these accusations. However, add the fact that sportswriters, coaches, athletes, and fans rarely, if ever, comment when the officials do a good job in a game. And consider that the statistical "evidence" given to support claims that the referees are one-sided, like the number of free throws taken per game, is highly subjective. The combination of all of these factors serves to reinforce the officials as villains.

Representations like these, in my opinion, only serve one purpose. That purpose is to establish the voices of sportswriters, athletes, coaches, and even the "unnamed" observers as authoritative and the voices of officials mute. If you cannot trust even the best officials in the NBA to call a game fairly, you probably will not trust what they have to say if they were able to speak publicly. By perpetuating myths about referees "in the pockets" of the networks and/or league administration, by establishing referees as

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[218] Hughes, Frank, "Blowing the Whistle on Bad Officiating", (23/05/02), [internet] http://sports.espn.go/espn/print?id=1386085&type=columnist, accessed on 30/06/02.

additional opponents, and by only pointing out the mistakes and/or poor performances, referees become and remain villains of the game.

Dismissible Villains

> "It's not about Shaq and the refs. ... It's about guys who guard him having to check their own hearts."[219]

Unfortunately, the project to subvert referees' knowledge and experience in the game of basketball does not end with the villainous representations by athletes, coaches, and sportswriters. A second, and perhaps more prominent and more powerful, technique is employed in the media. This technique is simply dismissal.

The dismissal of officials as having any credible or legitimate role in elite basketball is the ultimate way of privileging the voices of the other participants. Within this dismissal, several things are actually occurring. One is simply a parody of what officials do on the court. The second occurrence is the hypermasculinity of the players juxtaposed against the more conventional masculinity of the officials. And finally, it is the officials themselves who are complicit in and willing to allow this type of dismissal.

The first step in dismissing officials is the very subtle way in which sportswriters, players, coaches, and as we will see shortly, management, talk directly about officiating without ever speaking to the officials. Because officials in the NBA are not allowed to grant interviews, this makes a sportswriter's task extremely difficult. However, while officials rarely, if ever, comment on the quality of play or coaching, these other participants can freely comment on the quality of officiating. This establishes a hierarchy of knowledge in which only certain speakers are privileged.

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[219] Charles Oakley, in McCallum, Jack, "Shaq vs. the Refs", *Sports Illustrated*, Volume 95 Number 17 (29/11/01): 86.

In several of the conversations about whether Shaq fouls more than he gets fouled, players, coaches, or unnamed observers speak directly about the officiating.

> [Most NBA observers] concede that the singular combination of O'Neal's size, strength, nimble-footed quickness and ever developing skills has made it extremely difficult for even the best officials to whistle his game fairly.[220]

There is a glaring contradiction in saying that it is difficult for even the best referees to call a fair game around O'Neal even when these observers indicate in the preceding sentence that Shaq "doles out punishment proportional to the punishment he receives."[221] Despite this contradiction, these unnamed observers, who one can only assume are not officials, apparently can easily discern the difficulties facing officials in this situation. In a similar manner, the quotations in the previous section by David Robinson and coach Rick Adelman are also good examples of the types of comments made by players and coaches about referees or the job they do that never get reciprocated by officials.

As my second chapter pointed out, referees are highly skilled, extremely disciplined sport participants. The officials who referee elite basketball have proven themselves to be worthy of the level of games they are assigned. However, despite this level of training and expertise as officials on the basketball court, it is highly unlikely that a sportswriter would ask an official about the effectiveness of a team's half-court offense, or a player's jump shot mechanics. This only compounds the irony of allowing players, coaches, management, and sportswriters to comment on the quality of officiating. The *power/knowledge* nexus this sets up is clearly in favor of all other participants except for the officials.

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[220] McCallum, p. 84.
[221] *ibid*

In addition to their silencing or simple dismissal, there is also another way that officials become invalidated. During the course of the 2001-2002 NBA season, Dallas Mavericks' owner, Mark Cuban, became the center of an on-going media circus revolving around comments he made about the officials, especially Supervisor of Officials, Ed Rush, in the NBA. Cuban told reporters that he "wouldn't hire the league's head of officials to manage one of the [Dairy Queen] restaurants."[222] Despite the numerous fines Cuban has received from the NBA Commissioner for things like the negative comments he makes about the officiating, he went an additional step to completely parody the officials he was criticizing.[223]

After his comment about not hiring the NBA officials to work in a Dairy Queen, Cuban took center stage in a media event that continued his mockery of officials. Cuban went to work in a Dallas Dairy Queen franchise for a day, proving to all that he was capable of doing what he criticized others of not being able to do. By no means did this publicity stunt imply that officials could not, if required, work successfully in a Dairy Queen, or any other fast food outlet. What it did do is draw attention to Cuban as a man who "walks the walk". In fact, the next step of his publicity circus was to take on the officials head-to-head.

Mark Cuban became a referee. In an exhibition match by the Harlem Globetrotters, possibly the most famous entertainment basketball team in history, Cuban donned the jersey and whistle and actually refereed twenty minutes of play. As the opening section of this chapter indicates, it takes significantly more than wearing a

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[222] Canadian Press Online, The Canadian Press (2001), 30/01/02, http://www.sportsnet.ca/nba/story/10123715595810.shtml, accessed on 31/01/02.

uniform and blowing a whistle to make someone a Good Official. Making this even more of a mockery, Cuban only refereed twenty minutes of the game. While this twenty minutes is more than the five he was scheduled to ref, it is far from the whole game a "real" official would be required to referee. Nonetheless, Cuban openly mocked the officials in the NBA, arguably the best officials in the world, by publicly belittling them and parodying the job they do. Using the North American press to do this carries significantly more meaning than the boos and hisses that often accompany unfavorable calls in a team's home arena. The shear scope of the audience that witnesses this type of treatment of officials serves to perpetuate this type of behavior towards officials at all levels of sport. If the multi-millionaire owner of a professional sports team can publicly berate officials, mocking them at other levels of sport seems all the more tolerable. One of the primary reasons why sport officials are so hard to retain in all levels of sport organizations is because this type of behavior is pervasive across all sports at all levels.

This type of tête-à-tête between the various sport participants and officials is not out of the ordinary. In many contact sports, players attempt to demonstrate their superiority through physical confrontations and posturing. It is not strange to think that this may carry over into players dealings with officials. While this is not an examination of physical and verbal abuse against officials, it is important to note that officials are often the victims of these types of abuse. From the hollers and jeers from spectators, and verbal confrontations with players and coaches, to the chest bumping (i.e., major league baseball), to death threats and other acts of physical violence, officials are frequently subjected to varying degrees of abuse. In all instances, it is a simple equation of the

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[223] *ibid.* This comment directed toward Ed Rush warranted a one-time US$500,000 fine from the NBA. *cf.*, Dallas Morning News reported that Cuban was fined a cumulative US$405,000 in 2001 for similar

perpetrators feeling the authority to be able to judge an official's performance and be openly critical to downright abusive. I have a difficult time trying to think of other occupations or avocations where this type of abuse would be tolerated even in its tamest forms. To me, there must be a structural root to this blatantly one-sided flow of abuse. The root of this is this power relationship in which all of the various sport participants are privileged as knowledgeable about officiating stems from pervasive representations of officials as villains, dismissible, or as Mark Cuban would have us believe, incompetent and even laughable.

Superman versus Ordinary Joe

With great power comes great responsibility.[224]

At this point of my examination, several recent motion picture releases come to mind as almost perfect analogies. Two, in particular, stand out as exemplary of the type of power relationships that play out between elite athletes and officials. In both the Twentieth Century Fox 2000 release, *X-Men*, and Sony Picture's 2002 *Spider-Man*, we find a theme of pitting super-villains versus superheroes. This is not a theme restricted to these motion pictures. This theme is revisited throughout popular culture in many forms. What makes these two examples special to this analysis is the motivation for those with "super" powers to either use them to protect or dominate those without. In either case, it ends up being only those with superpowers battling those with superpowers---a different, yet comparable situation to that which arises between professional basketball players and officials.

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outbursts regarding the officiating.

[224] "Uncle Ben" Parker in *Spider-Man*, Sony Pictures (2002). This is one of the last things Peter Parker's (Spider-Man) uncle told him before he was murdered, thus encouraging Parker to use his newfound powers for a greater good---to become a superhero.

The main premise of the *X-Men* movie, as with its comic book origins, is a race of genetically advanced Mutants split into two warring factions. Because of their difference and often freakish abilities, this new Mutant race is ostracized by the mainstream of "normal" human beings. One of these factions believes that their genetic, evolutionary superiority over the humans is cause for genocide of the "weaker" race. The protagonists, the X-Men, feel an obligation to protect the humans from such violence. The result of this paradigmatic clash is a continuous war between the two Mutant groups, with the X-Men coming to the rescue of humanity as the foils to a villainous plot to destroy it. The leader of the antagonist Mutants, Magneto (Ian McKellan), continually attempts to justify his actions to his nemesis and leader of the X-Men, Professor X (Patrick Stewart), by arguing that non-mutant humans are inferior to Mutants and therefore should not be the judges of their superior race. In *Spider-Man* we see a very similar theme emerge when the antagonist, Green Goblin (Willem Dafoe), tries to convince Spider-Man to join him in his bid to rule over humanity, believing that his physical and mental superiority again are sufficient that normal humans cannot stand in judgment due to their inherent inferiority.

In the National Basketball Association, we see very similar themes emerge as well. The similarities begin with the physical superiority of the athletes contrasted to the average population as well as to the other participants in the game (i.e., the officials). To demonstrate this best, I return to the central figure of much of the examination to this point, Shaquille O'Neal. Throughout this chapter I have indirectly drawn attention to the parallels between O'Neal and Superman. These parallels come via not only his size and strength, but the iconic, diamond-shaped "S" tattoo emblazoned on his massive arm surrounded by the words "Man of Steel". This direct reference to the famed superhero,

Superman, leaves little doubt that O'Neal fancies himself as physically superior to those around him. "I'm too big and too strong and too skillful for anyone to stop me."[225] In addition, his current forecast of entering law enforcement once he retires from the NBA only further serves to solidify this image of superhero. What lawless individual would dare confront O'Neal, when even his largest colleagues in the NBA struggle to guard him on the basketball court?

> "There are other huge people in the league," says the Dallas Maverick's [Shawn] Bradley, who at 7'6" is five inches taller than Shaq but about 100 pounds lighter, "but nobody feels like Shaq. And nobody that size is nearly as quick or can jump like that."[226]

Indeed, just as Magneto or the Green Goblin in fiction, it seems that Shaquille O'Neal's combination of size, strength, and physical ability near fabled proportions. And as the earlier investigation has revealed, O'Neal poses many problems for the other participants in a basketball game. Defenders are forced to engage with O'Neal with extreme physical force that is often equated with brutality. The preseason NBA issue of *Sports Illustrated* closes with an ominous prediction that implies that Shaq may not always be able to constrain himself if the abuse is not curbed, despite his normal complacency.

> "If most players were fouled the way Shaq gets fouled---hard fouls, hacking---they'd be ready to fight," Minnesota Timberwolves coach Flip Saunders says, "but Shaq just takes it and goes to the free throw line."[227]

In response to this observation, O'Neal offers a reminder to all of those individuals who feel that rule changes in the 2001-2002 season might help the situation. And Shawn

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[225] McCallum, p. 85.
[226] *ibid*
[227] *ibid*. p. 88.

Bradley, quoted earlier, closes the article with the shadowy prediction that Shaq may be an unstoppable force.

> "One thing you have to remember is that I've used only 20 percent of my strength at the offensive end," [Shaq] says. "I keep it to that because I never know how the game is going to be called. With the new rules, who knows? Maybe I'll up that a little. As ridiculously low as that 20% figure seems, Bradley believes it. "Sometimes I look at him, and as much as people are getting moved around in there, I know he's not using all of his strength," says Bradley. "I have thought about what would happen if he did." And what would happen? "I'd rather not go there."[228]

So what does this have to do with hypermasculinity versus conventional masculinity? Or more specifically, how does this implicate referees? If it is not evident from the preceding paragraphs, there is a strong current of hypermasculinity in the NBA.[229] If parallels, both real and imagined, between NBA players and superheroes is not enough, there is supporting literature to indicate that the struggle for masculine identity plays out primarily on the battlefield of conventional, or as Connell among others would suggest hegemonic, masculinity versus marginalized masculinities such as what I call the hypermasculinity of the black athlete.

To elaborate, my use of the word 'hypermasculinity' is more than simply "the belief that ideal manhood lies in the exercise of force to dominate others."[230] It is the combination of excessive use of physicality or physical force to dominate others, hypersexuality (straight), and physical endowment all embodied in a biologically male body. I make this distinction because it is important in discussions about alternative masculinities that are perhaps even more marginalized. I also make this distinction

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[228] *ibid*

[229] I suggest one example of this is the "flop" strategy employed by some defenders to "draw the foul" against Shaq, as opposed to the "real men" who guard him straight up, as Charles Oakley suggests. There are also strong currents of hypersexuality that I do not introduce here.

because hypermasculinity is equally characterized by a social and/or moral subordination as it is via the physically-based superiority.[231] All of this, remember, is marginalized in relation to what I have been calling conventional, or hegemonic, masculinity.

Officiating is very much a conventionally masculine endeavor. Conversely, as much of the previous discussion has indicated, basketball players, especially those in the NBA, are almost perfect examples of hypermasculinity. The confrontation between these two forms of masculinity serves as an extremely interesting site for analysis. To begin, the first point to recognize is that at one level, the hypermasculine need to be policed, kept in check—refereed. This vigil is kept by officials, who I have demonstrated earlier to be the guardians of conventional masculinity. The second point of note is that on another level, synonymous with my earlier comparison to fictional superheroes, the battle is really only between the athletes. At the level of representation, the conventionally masculine officials are inadequate to impose and enforce their rules and judgments on the physically superior, hypermasculine athletes. Despite their authority to enforce the rules of the game, the exaggerated physicality of the hypermasculine athletes often becomes too much for the officials to control, as best evinced by an on-court altercation between Shaquille O'Neal and Brad Miller during the 2001-2002 NBA season.

As it was almost ominously predicted in the *Sports Illustrated* NBA Preseason issue, O'Neal finally did take matters into his own hands in relation to the amount of abuse he receives from defenders.

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[230] Varda Burstyn, "'Hooligans, Studs, and Queers': Three Studies in the Reproduction of Hypermasculinity" in *The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics, and the Culture of Sport*, University of Toronto Press: Toronto (1999): 192.

[231] See Michelle D. Dunbar, "Black masculinity, gender transgression and reproductive rebellion on MTV", in McKay, Jim, Michael A. Messner, and Don Sabo (eds.), *Masculinities, Gender Relations, and Sport: Research on Men and Masculinities*, Sage Publications, Inc.: Thousand Oaks (2000): 265.

> O'Neal flew into an uncontrollable rage when he was fouled hard late in the fourth quarter, throwing two roundhouse rights -- the second of which connected as Miller had his back turned.[232]

This outburst was in direct reaction to a string of consistently hard fouls by his defenders. In what has become colloquially known as the "Hack-a-Shaq" defense, O'Neal was being literally hammered by his opponents.

> Before the game, O'Neal seemed bemused that Oakley had said he would not back down from the seven-foot, 340-pound center. And as the game progressed, it was clear that Oakley was keeping his word.
>
> Nearly every time that O'Neal got the ball in the low post, Oakley or Miller fouled him hard. O'Neal responded to one hard foul by whacking Miller in the face with his forearm.[233]

On the play that led to the fight, Oakley and Miller both hammered O'Neal after he caught a pass.

> "You can't hit him softly because he's just going to flick you off like a little fly," Miller said. "Just to bump him is doing nothing. You've got to wrap him up and put him on the free throw line."[234]

This scenario only serves to more deeply entrench the hypermasculinity, especially in the physically dominating sense, as the norm for the players of the NBA. Those in charge of enforcing order during the game, however, are noticeably absent from this conversation thus far. That is, of course, until we look a little deeper. In spite of what is implied by the article title, "Suspended Shaq Snaps at Officials"[235], O'Neal snapped at his on-court opponents, not at the referees. In fact, O'Neal refused to speak with reporters after the game, let alone speak out against the officials. From earlier

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[232]Canadian Press Online, "Incredi-Bull upset in Chicago!",13/01/02, The Canadian Press (2001), http://www.sportsnet.ca/nba/story/10109001088287.shtml, accessed on 13/01/02.
[233] Canadian Press Online, "Suspended Shaq snaps at officials", 13/01/02, The Canadian Press (2001), http://www.sportsnet.ca/nba/story/10109631078120.shtml, accessed on 13/01/02.
[234] *ibid*
[235] *ibid*

references we know that O'Neal does have strong feelings about the officials in the NBA, but the object of his revenge in this case was not the officials. Los Angeles coach Phil Jackson, on the other hand, does lash out at the officials.

> "That was quite a calamity out there," Lakers coach Phil Jackson said. "We continually warned the referees that they were playing too rough. I hold those officials responsible for not taking control of this game earlier."[236]

Despite the fact that there is evidence to support that the officials were indeed attempting to control the game, the resultant melee and subsequent charge by Jackson seem to indicate that the officials were unable to contain the violence playing out before them. The implications of this are far more reaching than hints of a mere inability to control this one situation. Instead of an isolated inability to control an exceptional circumstance, the history of the Shaq debate tends to indicate an inadequacy on the part of the officials.

During the game in which this altercation takes place, the officials do exercise their power to control the game in several different circumstances. To begin, it seemed that there was not much need for intervention on the part of the officials due to the fact that the Lakers, defending World Champions, were easily out in front of the Bulls who, at 7-29, held the league's worst record. Secondly, the officials did intervene with one of their heaviest penalties, a technical foul, when things started to escalate early on between O'Neal and Miller. "O'Neal picked up a technical foul earlier in the game for whacking Miller across the head with his forearm after another hard foul."[237] In response to the eventual melee, the officials ejected several players from the game. O'Neal, Oakley, and Miller—the three directly involved in the altercation—were all ejected from the game,

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[236] *ibid*
[237] *ibid*

ultimately receiving suspensions and fines from the league.[238] The Lakers' "Rick Fox was also ejected for arguing with the referees as they tried to sort things out."[239] And finally, the double foul called between Samaki Walker and Marcus Fizer rounded out the list of fouls that an official can call to control a game. Without any statistical data to support this claim, I contend that it is a very rare occurrence for so many of these game management-type fouls (technicals, ejections, and double fouls) to be called in the same game. The fact that multiple technicals, multiple ejections, and double fouls were called suggests that the officials were exercising all of the options available to them in order to maintain and eventually restore order to this game.

Regardless of their attempts to successfully control the game, at the level of representation the officials remain incapable of and inadequate to judge the play of these superior athletes---these "super" men. Just like human law enforcement in the movies or comic books that I referred to earlier, the officials in the NBA are represented as inadequate to deal with anything beyond what is considered normal or conventional. The super-villains can only be dealt with by superheroes. According to yet another NBA superstar, Vince Carter, "We can't let referees dictate how we're going to play. That's not my thing."[240] If you translate this to the standards for manhood and/or masculinity the officials again fall short. The super men battle the super men on the court. The ordinary men, the officials, are simply dispensable characters who have no real power to settle disputes between these athletes. The public imagination is then left with an almost perfect adaptation for a comic book or major motion picture.

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[238] Scott Soshnick, "Shaq gets three-game suspension, $15,000 fine", *The Detroit News* (15/01/02).
[239] Canadian Press Online, "Incredi-Bull upset in Chicago!",13/01/02, The Canadian Press (2001), http://www.sportsnet.ca/nba/story/10109001088287.shtml, accessed on 13/01/02.

Political Economy of (In)Visibility

> I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allen Poe ... I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids---and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. ... That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact ... I am not complaining, nor am I protesting either. It is sometimes advantageous to be unseen, although it is most often rather wearing on the nerves.[241]

> *The examination transformed the economy of visibility into the exercise of power.* Traditionally, power was what was seen, what was shown and what was manifested and, paradoxically, found the principle of its force by which it deployed that force. Those on whom it was exercised could remain in the movement by which it could remain in the shade; they received light only from that portion of power that was conceded them, or from the reflection of it that for a moment they carried. Disciplinary power, on the other hand, is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility.[242]

The final aspect of the power relationship between officials and the other participants central to this analysis that I explore is the official's own complicity in the silencing, subordination, and dismissal that I have argued takes place. While there is perhaps little officials can do about some of the things that happen to them within the realm of representation, there are things they do that only serve to facilitate their subordination, vilification, and silencing.

Recall an earlier quotation taken from an advertisement directed specifically toward officials. The ad plays on a popular theme within officiating circles. It is a common belief held by officials as well as many of the other sport participants in games like basketball. "When I'm doing my job well I am invisible." This plays on the idea that the Good Official is one who, at the end of the game, remains relatively unnoticed.

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[240] Canadian Press Online, "Shaq, Kobe rout the Raptors", 06/01/02, The Canadian Press (2001), http://www.sportsnet.ca/nba/story/10103582829160.shtml, accessed on 07/01/02.
[241] Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, Vintage Books: New York (1947): 3.
[242] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 187.

The point I am trying to make here is a culmination of the preceding discussions in this chapter. From those discussions, we know that officials are not "invisible" and that it is only through their visibility that their power can be exercised. The arduous discipline of officials' bodies to exact performances is testament to this requirement for visibility, especially a specified type of visibility. We also know that, when an official blows his or her whistle, all eyes are directed toward that official waiting for the communication of the infraction, for what is to come next. This communication, while partially audible, is primarily visual. The good referee must be seen in order to be effective. So how does this myth of invisibility enter this discussion?

Albeit that officials may have a subliminal intention to blend in to their surroundings via their dark or vertically striped clothing, the invisibility discussed here is less about being physically invisible as being symbolically invisible. To be invisible, for a referee, is to remain relatively unnoticed. As we have seen in many of the earlier examples, officials get noticed when the calls or non-calls do not correlate with the expectations of the other participants, as was the case in the 2002 NBA playoffs between the defending champion Los Angeles Lakers and the Sacramento Kings.

> *Do you know who they are? Do you know who they are sending?* No, the buzz was not about which celebrities were showing up – we were in Sacramento, after all. It was about which refereeing crew the NBA would assign to officiate what to that point had been an unevenly whistled series. Everyone was amazed when Danny Crawford, Bernie Fryer and Ed T. Rush walked onto the court. They are not considered la crème de la crème of zebras; Fryer, in fact, was the ref who mistakenly waved off the a game-winning three-point shot by the Charlotte Hornets' Baron Davis against Orlando earlier in the postseason.[243]

The "invisible" referee becomes one who does not have to resolve conflicts, but rather one who pre-empts or avoids conflict by virtue of calling the obvious infractions and

managing a game to the level of expectation of the majority of the participants. This is a strategy stressed to officials at all levels of play. Call the obvious. Control aggressive play early. Do not unnecessarily interrupt the flow of a game. Manage the game participants by diffusing rather than escalating tensions. If the officials do all of these things well in any game, they will escape without any controversy---as if they were invisible.

This symbolic invisibility becomes understandable as a goal for officials in this light. There is an old saying that "the only way to ref a perfect game is if players play the perfect game." I am not convinced that this has ever happened---a game free of infractions. However, there have been countless games in which the officials' performances matched the expectation of the majority of participants, notable conflicts were minimal if not entirely absent, and the referees left the court with little or no recognition. Indeed, there would have been little for even the sportswriters to comment on regarding the officiating! The fact that officials strive for a quality game that is enjoyable for all participants is a testament to their commitment to the game itself. This is yet another reason why officials should be recognized as valid participants, rather than dismissed or vilified as has been demonstrated.

With the pursuit of a symbolic invisibility understood, how then can we interpret the coinciding silence by officials. The dismissal of their voices is only part of this equation. The main point of this section is to analyze officials' complicity in the silence that is perpetuated by officials. Why do officials choose not to speak? Is this entirely structural (i.e., that sportswriters simply will not speak for officials)? Or is there

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[243] Jack McCallum, "Refereeing the refs", *Sports Illustrated*, CNNSI.com (05/06/02), accessed on 11/19/02.

something within the culture of officiating that requires officials to remain silent? Could it be that there is a political economy in silence?

I return yet again to the "Shaq versus the Refs" article central to this analysis, and to its author, Jack McCallum. Firstly, although not necessarily a welcomed part of their job, sportswriters do, in fact, write about, and even moderately support, the referees. Jack McCallum, NBA writer for *Sports Illustrated*, notes:

> I want you to know that I hate talking about the refs. Officiating is an impossibly difficult job. People who complain about the refs wouldn't last four minutes whistling an NBA game, maybe even a high school game. So it is with some reluctance that I plunge – before the opening game of the Finals between the Lakers and the New Jersey Nets – into this hot-button subject.[244]

Secondly, Supervisor of Officials for the NBA, Ed Rush, is in fact interviewed by McCallum for the "Shaq vs. the Refs" article. As we will see, there are other rare cases where officials voices are made known to the general public (as opposed to being restricted to referee-specific audiences). However, the scope of Rush's comments is relatively limited. Especially when one compares the other speakers in the article supposed to be about Shaq and the refs, what the only ref (retired) in the article says is quite minimal. Part of the reason for this might be quite obvious to some. Rush, like almost any authority figure in a similar position, does not want to reveal or admit that there is any inadequacy or incompetence on the part of the officials, since they are under his charge. In this sense, there is a real economy to keeping quiet. Admitting, in this case, that Shaq poses a real problem for the officials would be to put Rush's job in jeopardy, as he is the one responsible for the correct training of NBA officials.

However, optimal operating conditions for Good Officials do not rely entirely on silence. The real political economy lies within invisibility or anonymity. And within this

economy, a definite paradox exists. As Foucault notes, "as power becomes more anonymous and more functional, those on whom it is exercised tend to be more strongly individualized."[245] This has a double meaning for the Good Official. As the referee-specific discourse suggests, the Good Official is an invisible official, the one nobody noticed was there when the game is over. It is through this invisibility that Good Officials exercise their power over the participants in a given contest. However, as I have shown, "[t]he more one possesses power or privilege, the more one is marked as an individual, by rituals, written accounts or visual reproductions."[246] The paradox for the Good Official is that he is simultaneously a subject exercising a power made possible by symbolic invisibility *and* an object of that same power. The Good Official desires to work from that hidden, anonymous place; but, as he effectively does so, he concomitantly becomes subject to the "written accounts" and "visual reproductions" that identify him as an individual. Thus, despite the economy of invisibility, it is precisely the same mechanism at work that makes it possible for the types of vilifying and dismissive representations of even Good Officials. Their complicity within their own discourse necessarily makes them the silent Other for external, competing discourses. Ironically, there is a recuperative possibility for the Good Official, however. This is outlined in the following, final chapter.

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[244] *ibid*
[245] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 193.
[246] *ibid.* p. 192.

Chapter Five:
The Good Official ... Recuperated

> Feminism, in all its forms, and poststructuralism share a concern with subjectivity. The recent feminist movement began with the politics of the personal, challenging the unified, apparently ungendered individual of liberalism and suggesting that, in its gender blindness, liberal humanism masks structures of male privilege and domination. Poststructuralism, too, has been anxious to deconstruct the liberal-humanist subject in order to theorize how meanings are produced, how they are effective, why they conflict and how they change.[247]

> "It's important for people to know that she's not there because she's a woman, it's because she's *a good official*."[248]

The central purpose of this work was an interrogation of the Good Official—how it is constructed, what discourse governs, what interruptions it experiences, and to whom it is meaningful. Chapter Two outlined the "making" of the Good Official, and revealed where the discursive formation of what constitutes the 'good' in the official. Chapter Three interrupted the Good Official. It made evident the double edge of the discourse, to show that women, through their presence and success as officials, introduce rupture to the dominant discourse of the Good Official, and to show that category of woman is simultaneously ruptured via embodiment of the discursive traits upheld for the Good Official. In Chapter Four, the meaning of the Good Official was uncovered. There, it became apparent that the Good Official is primarily only meaningful for officials. Other sport participants (e.g., coaches, players, fans, media) most often view officials, not as 'good', but as villains, or as simply dismissible. In this, the fifth and final chapter, I show how the Good Official gets recuperated, reinscribed, and reconciled beyond its traditional

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[247] Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructural Theory*, Blackwell Publishers: Oxford (1987), pp. 41-42.

[248] Bob Lenarduzzi, former Canadian National Soccer team player and coach, analyst, on Sonia Denoncourt, Canada's FIFA referee, in Lisa Bowes (prod.), "Sonia Denoncourt – FIFA Referee", Sport Axxess, Headline Media Group Inc.: Hamilton (2002).

confines of referee-specific (exclusive) conversations. The Good Official, ruptured by the presence of women officials, is also recuperated by the presence of women. Women officiating elite sports, at long last, get non-officials talking about the Good Official, even if it is talking about what is not so good.

As we have seen with women officials in particular, subjectivity is often more difficult to negotiate for subordinated or marginalized individuals under hegemonic systems of oppression. This work then provides at least one alternative to the liberal-humanist subject positions identified within these contexts. If it has done so, it has been via alternative, critical readings of the taken-for-granted subject positions through discourses of hegemonic masculinity, homophobia, and racism.

The Good Official ... Recuperated

When I discuss the recuperation of the Good Official, I do so by taking up the poststructural notions of *rupture* and *recuperation*. These take many other forms, such as interruption, disruption, and renewal, reinscription, reconciliation, or restoration.[249] The presence of women officials interrupts, or introduces rupture to, the discourse of the Good Official—within the referee-specific discourse. Beyond that, in the dominant discourses of sport participants, the Good Official does not even really exist, other than as a villain; that is until women officials enter the equation. When women officials are introduced to this same environment something different starts to take place. Recall the story from Chapter Two about Stacey Livingston, the American referee of the Canada versus US gold medal women's hockey game. Despite the fact that most people were

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[249] *cf* Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago (1989). Also, Charles C. Lemert (ed.), *French Sociology: Rupture and Renewal since 1968*, Columbia University Press: New York (1981).

caught up in the fact that she had a very poor performance, and that her credibility (a hallmark of the Good Official) was extremely questionable, at least one reporter took this up based on the criteria of what constitutes a 'good' official.

> Not only was [Livingston] unsuitable because she is from one of the nations competing in the game, but as of January 2002 she was not *good* enough to be the Referee in women's NCAA hockey games. The next month she is *good* enough to referee the Gold Medal Game in the Olympics.[250]

While Livingston clearly did not meet the criteria for a Good Official in this case, two things happened as a result. The first is that the presence of a woman referee in such a high profile game was questioned, as could almost be expected within the sexist, misogynist environment of sport. Secondly, however, the fact that an official was chosen who was not 'good' enough, provides an indication that the constituents of a Good Official may not be totally beyond the scope of sport participants other than referees themselves. Maybe players, coaches, fans, and sportswriters really do know what a Good Official looks like. Unfortunately, for both Livingston and the Olympic gold medal hockey game, she was not a good official this game. But, reading between the lines a little bit, it should be evident that she is working within a system that is trying to produce Good Officials. Even the best officials have poor games. This does not exclude them from the discourse of the Good Official. Over time, women will gain the experience and foster the credibility to work elite International ice hockey. The Good Official is still alive and well, just perhaps a little ways off for women's ice hockey.

The other shortfall of this example is that it is about a woman official in an all-women's sport. However, the same thing does happen for women officiating men's

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[250] Tom Mathers, http://www.newsandevents.utoronto.ca, accessed on June 18, 2002 [my italics]. This quote is in reference to the controversial selection of Stacey Livingston, referee for the Gold Medal Women's Ice Hockey game at the 2002 Salt Lake City, Winter Olympics.

sports. The quote by famous Canadian soccer player, coach, and analyst, Bob Lenarduzzi, about Canada's FIFA soccer referee who also referees top level men's soccer, Sonia Denoncourt, is a fine example of this. "It's important for people to know that she's not there because she's a woman, it's because she's *a good official*."[251] This is not just the simple dismissal of gender. It is, however, a straightforward claim that what allows Denoncourt to work elite men's soccer are her abilities as a Good Official. The same can be said for Violet Palmer's rise to, and success in, the NBA. Palmer followed the path to becoming a Good Official that is outlined in Chapter Two. The fact that she did it so relatively quickly is a testament to just how 'good' an official she really is.

While I still maintain that it is extremely important to read the comments about women officials through the discourse of hegemonic masculinity, it is not the only reading possible. When Michael Jordan says, "If they can referee, they can referee no matter what sex they are,"[252] maybe he is also talking about the effects of the Good Official discourse that produce the 'people' who *can* referee, and referee well enough to be hired by the NBA. The fact that women are having success at the most elite levels of sport, even men's sport, suggests that perhaps something is changing within the dominant discourse of the Good Official. While I have outlined many of the ways in which the dominant discourse of HM tries to account or accommodate for women as officials, the rupture has taken place, and the recuperation is underway.

Not only do we have sport participants at large taking up the talk of the Good Official, we can also see that the discourse of the Good Official itself has undergone some reconciliation. When Melanie Davis says that she wants it to be known that when

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[251] Lisa Bowes (prod.), "Sonia Denoncourt – FIFA Referee", Sport Axxess, Headline Media Group Inc.: Hamilton (2002).

she makes a mistake it is because she is an *official* and not just because she is a *woman*, this may not be a refusal of her womanhood. It could be read as a bold assertion that yes I am a woman, but yes I am an official too. And if you take the time to realize the path that she had to take to get an assignment in the NCAA Men's Championship tournament, you would realize that she is indeed a Good Official. She *has* to be 'good' to get that assignment. So did Palmer and Kantner. So did Sonia Denoncourt. So did Gera, Wren, Postema, and Cox, even though they never did break into the major leagues, they obviously embodied the qualities of a Good Official sufficiently to perform at very elite levels, long before there were any other women to follow.

Yes, the presence of women as elite officials in men's sport is a serious disruption to the Good Official, a notion that is so deeply entrenched within hegemonic masculinity that it often cannot even be seen. However, the presence of these same women has necessarily called for a rethinking of what it means to be a Good Official. The rupture has initiated a renewal process. It has also initiated a reconciliation between two competing groups – officials and the rest of the sporting community. It will be very interesting to see where it all goes from here, in the post-Kantner era. If it is true that even in the NBA the next woman official is about three to five years away, and the other major professional men's sports leagues have not yet followed suit, then there definitely is still work to be done. The restoration of the Good Official is not complete in this new era. But, at least we can see some evidence that it has begun.

<u>It's All About Identity Politics</u>

As I indicated *why* this research is important at the conclusion of Chapter One, it basically boils down to how we treat each other. As I have hopefully shown, the way

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[252] E.J. Dionne Jr., "Not for men only", *Commonweal*, Volume 124 Issue 20 (21/11/97): 7.

those who are situated within the dominant, hegemonic discourses of masculinity, race, and sexuality speak about those in the margins is not always nice. The effects of power get manifested in many ways. The sexism, racism, and homophobia of the dominant discourse for officials makes it incredibly difficult for anyone who is not a white, heterosexual male. Despite the lengths some individuals must go to in order to pass within this framework, their presence is still sufficient to interrupt the taken-for-granted, invisible operation of *power/knowledge*. Critical readings of these transgressions make these operations even more visible. My goal, through the readings I have just offered, is to hopefully contribute toward the day when the color of our skin, our sexed bodies, our sexuality, or any of the other axes of difference will not elicit the types of responses that do harm and reinforce oppression and violence to those outside of the mainstream. I hope that bringing some of these types of reactions into full view, those within the dominant center will be able to see themselves in a new light. Perhaps we will begin to see that the ways we establish and enforce our identities is often both harmful and untenable. When we continue to reinscribe and reinforce Manichean binaries, we only continue to do harm, and we build our own identities on falsehoods and myths. I am not suggesting that we can come to know ourselves in any tenable, unitary way. What I am suggesting is that perhaps there is a way for us to come to terms with the complexities of identity. Perhaps there is a way we can be comfortable with our identity without attempting to obliterate any alternatives. "There is no moment in which the powers that cohere in the state can ever exhaustively resume those that are dispersed through the plurality of practices in society."[253] To that end, I hope we can one day embrace diversity, in a way that recognizes difference, yet does not subordinate it.

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[253] Hall, Stuart, "The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism among the Theorists", in Nelson, Cary and

Perhaps this could also be considered the contribution of this work to the overall field of cultural studies. The fact that I have chosen to focus my readings in an area that has previously been neglected, I show that there are still locations in which cultural criticism can be employed and there are still sites in which axes of difference and the *power/knowledge* relationships governing those sites need to be critically examined. Thus, for now I will be content with continuing the type of work that makes visible the invisible and the taken-for-granted. That is, of course, except for officials. For them, I wish them all the good fortune of being able to walk off the courts and fields of sporting contests everywhere without anyone even noticing they were there!

"My fervent hope is that these are my last words about refereeing … at least until next season."[254]

Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, University of Illinois Press: Urbana (1988): 49.

[254] McCallum, Jack, "Refereeing the refs", *Sports Illustrated*, CNNSI.com (05/06/02), accessed on 11/19/02.

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